

# MARXIST PHILOSOPHY: A STUDY GUIDE FOR REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE AGE OF ELECTRONICS

*The Institute for the Study of the Science of Society*

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## DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*In memory of Sue Ying, who instructed us in the study of Marxism, inspired us with her relentless pursuit of knowledge, encouraged us to grow, and challenged us to forever challenge ourselves.*

*Marxist Philosophy: A Study Guide for Revolutionaries in the Age of Electronics* is both a continuation and an extension of Marxist philosophy. It rests on study and discussion of both the scientific writings of Marx and Engels and the organizational and theoretical continuity of the communist movement since their time. However, today's scientific and technological changes, as well as the economic and social changes they bring about, also make possible an extension of our understanding of the process of change and the challenges revolutionaries face today.

Much of the study in philosophy summed up here pre-dates the formation of the Institute for the Science of Society. That study was an essential reference point for thousands of revolutionaries in various political organizations over several decades. Many of those discussions began in the 1970s and 1980s under the auspices of the Communist League and the Communist Labor Party and then continued in other forms after the CLP was disbanded in 1993. So the "we" referred to in the Introduction is a much broader group of revolutionaries than the Institute staff itself.

Although the objective economic processes referred to in some of the classes are having an impact on society and politics around the globe, the Study Guide explores the implications for revolutionaries in this country.

The staff of the Institute for the Study of the Science of Society is grateful to have been a part of these discussions over the years. The editors had the privilege of summing up and extending those discussions. To do so, we relied on the collective discussions of the full Staff of the Institute. Special thanks go to Shavian Selvaraj and Alix Mariko Webb, who helped to edit the editors, and to Nicholas Kim McQuerrey for the creativity and thoughtfulness he applied to the design of the Study Guide.

Many of the readings in the Study Guide are accessible thanks to two websites – [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org) and [www.marx2mao.org](http://www.marx2mao.org). We want not only to express our gratitude for the permission to use material from those websites in the creation of the Study Guide, but also to encourage all students of Marxism to make use of those websites as valuable resources.

We learned a lot working on this Study Guide, and we hope it will provide a way for revolutionaries to apply the intellectual energy necessary to meet the actual challenges posed by the revolutionary process in this country in this epoch.

The Editors,

*Beth Gonzalez*  
*Brooke Heagerty*  
*Sandra Reid*

## INTRODUCTION

SOCIETY TODAY is in turmoil and transition. More is at stake than ever before — not only in whose interests society will be reorganized, but also how and when humanity will be able to take the next step toward realizing its full potential. We are in an epoch of human history made possible by an explosion of science and knowledge and defined by the beginning of production without labor. As society today enters this qualitatively new epoch, revolutionaries face new challenges. The mastery of the scientific method associated with Marxism is urgent. Using that Marxism, revolutionaries must focus intellectual attention on developing the guidelines for revolutionary practice in this epoch.

***“The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.”*** (Karl Marx, *Thesis on Feuerbach*)

Marx and Engels couldn't describe the changes going on before our eyes today, but their understanding of the laws of motion and change allowed them to anticipate a leap to a new quality of social and human development. The science of society they developed equips us to participate productively in the profound changes swirling around us.

The following excerpt from *Anti-Duhring*, by Frederick Engels, shows Engels' dialectical conception of development and suggests the potential offered by this epoch.

"The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilization was a step towards freedom.... For the generation of fire by friction for the first time gave man command over one of the forces of nature, and thus separated him forever from the animal kingdom. The steam-engine will never bring about such a mighty leap forward in human development, however important it may seem in our eyes as representing all those immense productive forces dependent on it, forces which alone make possible a state of society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual, and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human freedom, of an existence in harmony with the known laws of nature. But the simple fact that all past history can be characterized as the history of the epoch from the practical discovery of the transformation of mechanical motion into heat up to that of the transformation of heat into mechanical motion shows how young the whole of human history still is, and how ridiculous it would be to attempt to ascribe any absolute validity to our present views."

In this sense, Engels suggests leaps in science and technology far greater than those of his day, and he anticipates the scientific and material possibility for human beings to escape the dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest laws that govern the rest of the animal kingdom and to embrace and realize the full potential of their humanity.

This "Introduction" presents the contents of this Study Guide, discusses the importance of both philosophy and ideology to revolutionaries, offers some thoughts on the importance of Marxists developing doctrine for our time, and shares with you how this Study Guide

came to be. Some of the terms in this introduction will be more fully explored in the classes that follow.

## **Marxist Philosophy and Revolutionaries**

Marxist philosophy helps us set up and solve real questions. It explains the material nature of the world and the dialectical nature of its motion and change. Historical materialism is the extension of that methodology to the study of society and how it develops and changes. When revolutionaries extend the science of change to the study of society, we can understand how society evolves and leaps ahead, which aspects of social change are automatic and beyond our will and which aspects require conscious and planned action by people.

The complexities of history point to the importance of Marxist philosophy for revolutionaries. History is the multi-layered story of the relation between what objective conditions make possible and what conscious people make happen. It's the story of intrigue and deception for selfish gain, of personal sacrifice for high ideals, of wars for liberation of oppressed peoples, of revolutions to overthrow one class and secure political power for another. In a broader sense, it is the story of people fighting for their moral values and historically evolved aspirations in the context of economic and other material changes. It is the story of the relation between the practical (activity, organization, social struggle) and the conscious (philosophy, theory, politics, ideology). It is the story of political revolution within social revolution. Within history, revolutionaries take up the challenge to develop the subjective or conscious understanding that equips people to fight for and determine the results of the objective changes.

The more revolutionaries know about how the world works and how history unfolds, the better we are able to play our particular role.

## **So Why this Particular *Study Guide*?**

We want to make every possible contribution to the continuity of the study of Marx and Engels on philosophy. Philosophy isn't the property of the elite few; it belongs to every revolutionary. This Study Guide, for example, is the product of the summation of decades of collective experience and study by active revolutionaries. The search for the correct approach to advancing the revolutionary process in the US propelled the study and discussion of philosophy. The deeper understanding of philosophy generated the framework for developing doctrine for the questions of revolution posed by this epoch. By employing dialectical materialism to study the qualitative changes in how things are produced today, we were able to further our understanding of the process of change and to draw conclusions about what this means for society. We could then clearly see that to ensure the continuity of Marxism today, Marxists have to use the science to further develop the conclusions of how society is changing and why. Marxists must use those conclusions to more sharply focus their activity as revolutionaries.

Therefore, this Study Guide is aimed at the study of philosophy as the science of change. In assembling and distributing it, we hope to contribute a mechanism both for continuing to study the philosophy developed by Marx and Engels and for further exploring that philosophy in the context of a new epoch in social development. We hope that active revolutionaries will find this Study Guide useful and that it will provide a framework for the continuing development of the science, doctrine and practice of revolutionaries.

This Study Guide is a tool for active revolutionaries who strive to master the science of revolution. It provides a framework for discussion among those who are willing to study, think, and collectively develop the principles that will effectively guide the work of revolutionaries.

We revolutionaries today have new territory to chart, new challenges to figure out, new opportunities for actually achieving the kind of society that previous generations could only dream of. We hope the use of this Study Guide will, on the one hand, stimulate discussions that cultivate a scientific framework for revolutionary passion and, on the other hand, help aim the study of Marxism toward revolutionary practice.

## Ideology

In this spirit, something must be said about ideology and its role in ensuring that the study of philosophy truly becomes a tool for change.

Consciousness compels, motivates and directs action; action completes or consummates consciousness. What you do is an expression of what you think or believe on one level or another. Ideology is the intangible glue between what you think and what you do.

What do we mean by "ideology"? There are many different definitions and uses of the word. Many people refer to ideology in the sense of the contending sets of abstract ideas that separate one group of people from another. But here we are using the term "ideology" in the sense of a system of ideas that expresses and defines relationships among people and between individuals and society. For the revolutionary, ideology expresses an understanding of his or her relation to the rest of the world and a sense of responsibility to society. Ideology is not just a question of what you think, but rather how you approach what you think: what you do and how you see your place in the world and your role in changing it.

So what does ideology have to do with studying philosophy and the science of society? Science is not the same as ideology, but it is one of the fibers that strengthen ideology. Sterile study of philosophy or Marxism in general does not make one a revolutionary; nor does outrage at injustice equip the revolutionaries to accomplish their tasks. Ideology grows out of the interrelation between the passionate struggle for a better world and a scientific approach to accomplishing that change. For Marxists, the purpose and value of philosophy is not simply to interpret the world, but to change it. Marxist philosophy provides the scientific approach that reinforces our conviction that what we are fighting for is possible. It identifies the role of revolutionaries in the revolutionary process, provides the tools we need to figure out how to carry out our commitment to humanity, and gives us confidence that our energies are going to make a difference.

## **Scope of this *Study Guide* -- Themes in Philosophy**

The classes and readings in this Study Guide explore two main themes in the study of change. Both themes point to the responsibility of revolutionaries to develop the conscious side of the revolutionary process.

The first theme addresses the relationship of the objective and subjective aspects of the process of change. The central organizing concept is that changes in the productive forces are the basis for the revolutionary reorganization of society. These objective changes, however, don't automatically determine how society is organized. People fight out and decide the outcome of epoch-defining material changes in society, and they can only do so under definite material conditions.

For example, the Industrial Revolution ushered in a whole new stage of development of society. However, it was the class struggle and the different outcomes of the various political revolutions of that era that determined whether society would industrialize in the interests of the masses of people or in the interests of the capitalists.

Some distorted Marx's and Engels' thesis about how society changes, implying that Marx and Engels underestimated the role of the subjective. On the contrary, Marx and Engels relied on history and philosophy to show how people fight out and determine the changes made possible by objective changes. Once again, Marxists have to assess the objective, economic changes and rally to the responsibility of revolutionaries to develop the subjective side of the revolutionary process, to ensure the intellectual development of the combatants.

The second theme explores the nature of motion and change. Change is not just a shift in the balance of forces, and it doesn't come about simply through the same old thing getting bigger or more intense. What then accounts for change? Qualitative change can only begin when something new enters into an ongoing process from outside of that process or when something is extracted from the process.



As we grappled with the nature of the profound changes in the world today, we found that the current new objective conditions allowed us to understand the dialectics of change further than had been possible in previous times. The technology associated with electronics represents the beginning of production without labor — an antagonism to capitalism's essential relation of buying and selling labor power. By looking at the changes going on around us, we were able to grasp more deeply the importance of certain principles of Marxist philosophy, such as, the difference between contradiction and antagonism, how the introduction of something qualitatively new into a process begins the quantitative stages of the leap. Our understanding of philosophy then helped us grasp the importance of the materials changes going on throughout the world today.

An understanding of the motion of change also sharpened our grasp of the role of revolutionaries. Although capitalism could grow alongside of other forms of private property, communism won't automatically grow out of the destruction of capitalism. Communism is "a system or theory of the ownership of all means of production (and distribution) by the community or society...as a whole." Because communism means the abolition of private property, it cannot coexist with or spontaneously grow out of capitalism. Achieving it will depend on the consciousness and conscious activity of millions of people.

There exist certain values (such as the moral conviction that no one should be hungry in a world of plenty) and practices (such as the development and sharing of information and information products on the Internet) which are consistent with communism. Although these values and practices are consistent with communism, they can coexist with capitalism. Material conditions are setting the objective basis for people to fight for communism. What's missing is their consciousness to do so.

### **The Challenge of Developing Doctrine**

The interweaving of these two themes in philosophy, along with our collective efforts to be effective revolutionaries, kept challenging us and pushing us forward. We found that we had to make a distinction between the science of society, referred to as Marxism, and

doctrine, which is often also referred to as Marxism. Simply put, science helps us understand the world; doctrine is a guide to changing it. Once we understood that distinction, we saw the importance of developing doctrine. So the classes in this Study Guide lead to and culminate in a discussion of doctrine for this epoch. Here we will look briefly at several related questions that are more fully explored in the various classes, and developed in the class on doctrine.

What is doctrine and why is it so important to revolutionaries? Doctrine is a general policy or set of principles that guides political activity toward a definite political goal. These guidelines aim the political activity and collective efforts of revolutionaries toward pushing the process ahead through its various stages and toward its resolution.

As revolutionaries, we don't have the luxury of simply declaring what we're for and what we're against. Serious revolutionaries proceed from the standpoint of the line of march of the revolution – the stages it has to go through to consciously and politically resolve the questions society is objectively fighting out. Accomplishing each stage doesn't happen automatically; nor is it a smooth and even process. It depends on the consciousness of great numbers of people. Doctrine guides revolutionaries to identify the opportunities presented by the objective developments. It guides us as we set out to develop the thinking of the people and prepare for future stages of the revolutionary process as it matures.

Why is it so important to develop doctrine for our time? A new epoch means revolutionaries operate under different conditions and therefore need the guidance of new doctrine.

Marx and Engels made their intellectual and practical contribution in the context of the social revolution brought on by the shift from an agrarian-based to an industrial-based society. Likewise, we are also in an epoch of transition from one material basis of society to another, that is, an epoch of social revolution. And today, as in Marx's time, new tools are beginning to disrupt and destroy the society built on the old basis. Such moments of transition and instability in society are precisely when the work of revolutionaries is most decisive in determining how society reorganizes around those new tools.

But there is a crucial difference between the transition that society was going through in Marx's and Engels' time and that which our society is going through today. Marx and Engels described how the beginning of industrial production began to disrupt a society built around manual labor and how it destabilized those who held political power.

Today, the beginning of the application of electronics to production is disrupting a society based on electro-mechanical production and organized around large-scale industry. On the one hand, capitalism depends on, and is defined by, wage labor; on the other hand, new methods of production are beginning to eliminate labor. This particular clash of law systems shapes the social revolution of our epoch.

This makes all the difference in the world and calls for the development of doctrine to guide the work of revolutionaries today. Marx and Engels faced a situation in which the interests of the working class were opposed to those of the capitalist class, but the working class was locked into the system defined by the interdependence of the two hostile classes. The objective connections between those classes were growing and strengthening. By contrast, today new methods of production are undermining and destroying those connections. Today we face the social consequences of the capitalist system in the process of its destruction, not the growing pains and expansion of capitalism.

As a set of principles that guide revolutionaries' work, doctrine has to align to this qualitatively new situation. Its role is to guide revolutionaries' work within this particular leap in society in order to advance the reconstruction of society in the interests of all of humanity.

Besides aligning to the particular quality of the social revolution we are dealing with, doctrine also has to speak specifically to the current stage of the revolutionary process. Today doctrine has to guide us through the relatively early stages of the revolutionary process, when society and the thinking of the people are being disrupted. It should guide us as we focus our energies to develop the conscious understanding of the millions of people whose lives have been disrupted by underlying material changes and to cultivate

their ability to fight in their interests and the interests of all humanity. Future stages of the revolutionary process will bring new challenges and will call for the further development of doctrine.

What does this have to do with philosophy, and what difference does all this make to the practical work of revolutionaries? Philosophy is about change — what causes it and the nature of its motion. Revolutionaries are most effective when they proceed from an understanding of the nature of change and aim their work accordingly. Qualitative change doesn't come about through a mechanical increase or decrease of the amount or intensity of the old; it depends on the introduction of something new into an ongoing process. Objective conditions set the basis for social change; people determine the direction and outcome of that change. Doctrine proceeds from a scientific description of the objective conditions and the laws of how change takes place in order to determine general guidelines for the work of revolutionaries.

Many principles commonly accepted and followed by revolutionaries don't proceed either from an understanding of how change actually takes place or from an understanding of the specifics of this epoch. These principles are not always explicitly stated. However, as the by-products of imposing doctrine for one situation onto another, they are persistent. Certainly conceptions like "build an anti-monopoly coalition," "unite to fight the right," or "fight back" as routes to the transformation of society (or even to advancing the interests of the exploited and oppressed) reflect an incorrect application of doctrine that was appropriate elsewhere a century and a half ago.

Developing doctrine for this epoch and bringing it into play poses many more questions than we can cover in this Introduction. As you go through the classes in this Study Guide, you will explore the complexities of these and other questions.

### **How to Use the *Study Guide***

This guide offers a mechanism for the continued study and discussions that equip revolutionaries to critically analyze events as they unfold. We tried to aim the classes not so much at getting across a set of ideas as at providing a process through which

the methodology of Marxism becomes an integral part of the participants' intellectual and political lives. The value of this methodology is as a way of understanding the world and how it works, approaching questions revolutionaries have to figure out, and identifying the role of each individual in revolutionary social change. Therefore, we share this Study Guide not so much for one set of people to teach ideas or propagate beliefs to another set of people, but to nurture and enhance the ability of all of us to think and master the methodology for solving the problems posed by the class struggle of this epoch.

Naturally, there is a relation between how we think and what we think. So, some of the classes do point to some conclusions. But it is essential that we don't allow those conclusions (and tentative conclusions) to limit or define our study and development of the science. The tragic history of confusing science and doctrine has seen lives lost and revolutions betrayed. At times, this sort of confusion has also constrained science and reduced it to the justification for a doctrine or politically necessary policy at a given time and place. Revolutionaries need to continue to develop scientifically and to learn to employ the methodology that flows from Marxist philosophy so as to continually develop doctrine as times change.

We hope you will use the methodology explored in the Study Guide to tackle the actual questions revolutionaries face today. Go beyond imposing doctrine of past moments onto today's reality. Develop and share your classes, studies and conclusions. Above all, make this study and discussion a continual and integral part of your life as a revolutionary. The study of Marxism is not a one-time event. We learned a lot working on this Study Guide. We hope others will learn a lot using it and will contribute to the intellectual treasury of the revolutionary movement.

## **1. DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CAUSALITY**

This class will provide a basic overview of the principles of dialectical materialism. It is designed to provide a foundation for delving into and contributing to the philosophical concepts outlined in all of the Study Guide classes that follow.

Dialectical and historical materialism is the philosophical approach of revolutionaries to

the study of the real world in constant change. Dialectical materialism is Marxist philosophy.

Dialectics is the study of how things develop and change. The principles of dialectics are:

- Nature is an integrated and connected whole. Phenomena are connected through causality.
- Nature is in a state of constant change: development, disintegration, dying away and arising.
- Internal contradiction, the basis of quantitative development, is inherent in all things.
- Changes are from lower to higher order and occur as negations.
- Qualitative changes occur by a quantitative extraction from the quality or by quantitative introduction of an antagonistic new quality. Qualitative changes occur as leaps.
- Quantitative developments are definite and indispensable.

Materialism is the philosophical principle that the world is real and knowable and that ideas come from interacting with the world (as opposed to philosophical "idealism," which says that the world is a product of some idea or ideal).

Historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, the study of society and history. It shows that the method of securing the means of subsistence sets the foundation for the character of a social system.

The practical significance of the principles of dialectical and historical materialism is expressed in the law of causality. Behind the diversity of phenomena, there are definite and more or less stable connections, which are independent of human consciousness. The most fundamental and universal connection, observed everywhere and always, in all phenomena, is that every event has a cause, and every effect acts as a cause in some other connection, giving rise to new effects. The alternative to this view is that the world is a

jumble of eclectic, disconnected and unscientific circumstances.

An understanding of causality allows revolutionaries to draw political conclusions about the true, deep lying causes of phenomena and the effects that may occur. Causality means that the world is going somewhere. We only have to find out what is causing its motion. Then we can utilize that process to introduce the new ideas that can move the world forward. Ignorance of causality gives rise to unscientific explanations, making it impossible for revolutionaries to produce the effects they require.

## Readings

The readings below may raise questions that go beyond the introductory scope of this class. If so, we ask that you try to focus your discussion of dialectical and historical materialism and the importance of causality on the questions below. Future classes will further the discussion and probing of the fundamental concepts of Marxist philosophy.

- Joseph Stalin, "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," *Problems of Leninism*. <http://www.marx.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>
- The Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," Institute Resource Paper #3.
- O. Kuusinen, ed., Excerpt from Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, pp. 71-75; 77-80. ("kuusinen2.pdf")

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the key principles that describe dialectical development? Why does the dialectical method focus on that which is arising as opposed to that which seems durable and permanent? Why are new social forces invincible?

2. What is the basic principle of materialism? of historical materialism?

Describe the terms: instruments of production, productive forces, relations of production, and mode of production. Describe the dialectical development of the struggle between the constantly developing productive forces and the static productive relations.

3. How does dialectical materialism differ from idealism? What is the source of social ideas? Why is dialectical materialism as a philosophical approach fundamental to social revolution?

4. Discuss the law of cause and effect. Trace the basic law of capitalism as the drive for maximum profits through the events leading up to the overthrow of the system as an example of cause and effect. Why is it important to understand the difference between the cause, conditions and occasion of a political event? Discuss the practical significance of causality for revolution.

## **2. CONTRADICTION AND ANTAGONISM: THE BASIS FOR TWO KINDS OF CHANGE**

The question of change is fundamental to all philosophy. All life is motion and all motion is a series of changes. When we consider things in their motion, change and interconnection, we are at once confronted with contradiction. Every phenomenon in nature is a contradiction, a unity of opposites. Contradiction is an internal process and the basis of all quantitative development. Development or motion comes about through the struggle and unity of opposites.

For example, cause and effect make up a unity of opposites. Or, bourgeoisie and proletariat, together, make up bourgeois society. The two antithetical elements of a contradiction are both mutually exclusive and mutually dependent. Together they make a quality. Further, both sides of the contradiction come into being at the same time, in struggle. Their unity and struggle is absolute, quantitative and ongoing.

What, then, accounts for fundamental, or qualitative, change?

All processes develop in stages. The relationship between the two sides of a



contradiction becomes more contradictory within each stage, forcing the emergence of a new quantitative stage. Quantitative change creates the conditions for qualitative changes to occur.

Qualitative changes, however, occur only by quantitative extraction from the quality or by quantitative introduction of an antagonistic new quality into the process. Antagonism replaces and destroys contradiction. Antagonism is the mode of destruction and transformation to a new quality. Out of this process, a synthesis, a new quality, a new unity of opposites, is born. All qualitative changes occurs as leaps.

In contrast to dialectics, the metaphysical conception sees nature as an arbitrary collection of objects and events, independent of and isolated from one another, without universal, dialectical relationships. Metaphysics fails to grasp an essential dialectical principle: Internal contradiction is the basis of quantitative development and is in all things; but antagonism is the basis of destruction and transformation to a new quality.

### **Implications for Today**

These concepts are fundamental for revolutionaries. For example, without grasping the difference between contradiction and antagonism, revolutionaries will not understand the significance of today's qualitatively new method of production for social revolution and the paramount importance of injecting qualitatively new ideas into the revolutionary process. Without new ideas, social transformation to a qualitatively new (communist) society cannot occur.

### **Discussion Questions and Readings**

1. Describe contradiction, the unity and struggle of opposites. Choose an example to show how this works in nature and also in society.

## Readings

- J.V. Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. ("Dialectics comes from" to "which they are connected.")  
<http://www.marx2mao.com/Stalin/DHM38.html>
- (under construction) O. Kuusinen, ed., "Division into Opposites is the Chief Source of Development," *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*.  
<http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philo/texts/kuusinen1.html>
- Chart on the Law of the Unity and Struggle of Opposites.  
<http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philo/texts/universality.html>

2. What is antagonism? To answer, examine the Freedom Movement that began in the 1950s. Discuss why that social movement did not become antagonistic to capitalism. Also, trace the development of industry and show how the microchip created an antagonism to industrial production. Discuss what this antagonism means for the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Why is understanding the difference between contradiction and antagonism fundamental to our understanding of how things change?

## Readings

- Nelson Peery, "The Process of Development" and "Dialectics: Quantity, Quality, the Antagonistic Element," *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*. [Note from the Editors: There is an error on page 13. The last sentence in the 4th paragraph should read "Antagonism replaced contradiction and the social revolution was under way."]
- Brooke Heagerty and Nelson Peery, "The World Keeps Changing: Conditions and Results of the Civil Rights Movement," *Moving Onward: From Racial Division to Class Unity*. (pp. 32-40 in printed version)  
<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/Moving%20Onward.php>
- Brooke Heagerty and Nelson Peery, "The World Begins to Change:

World War II and After," Moving Onward: From Racial Division to Class Unity. (pp. 29-31 in printed version)

<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/Moving%20Onward.php>

- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," Institute Resource Paper #3. See section "How New Classes Arise on the Basis of New Productive Forces."
- (under construction) Chart on Law of the Unity and Struggle of Opposites.  
<http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philosophy/texts/universality.html>

3. How is dialectics different from metaphysics? Discuss and contrast the Hegelian and Marxist concept of thesis and antithesis in the formation of a contradiction. What are the political ramifications for revolutionaries if change is approached mechanically?

#### Readings

- J.V. Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism. ("Dialectics comes from" to "which they are connected.")  
<http://www.marx.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>
- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," Institute Resource Paper #3. (See quote beginning, "What is the dialectical process?")
- Frederick Engels, "Introduction (General)," Anti Duhring.  
<http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/AD78i.html#p1s14> (pp. 26-29)
- Frederick Engels, "Dialectics of Nature - Notes," Dialectics of Nature. ("The law of identity" to "the inclusion of difference within identity.")  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch07c.htm>

### **3. QUANTITY AND QUALITY: THE BIRTH OF THE NEW AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD**

The relation between quantity and quality addresses the dialectical nature of motion, the process of the destruction of the old and development of the new, and how change comes about.

We speak of quality in the sense of a process and quantity in the sense of the stages of development of the process. It is important to make the distinction between quantity in this sense and quantity in the sense of numbers or amount. Change is not a simple shift in the balance of forces or the simple increase or decrease of the old. While contradiction is the basis for growth and development, antagonism is the basis for destruction and the rise of something new. The quantitative introduction of a new quality (a quality antagonistic to the process) begins the leap. The new quality develops quantitatively and, through a step-by-step process, disrupts and destroys whatever previously held the process together.

Understanding the relation of quantity and quality allows revolutionaries to understand the line of march of the revolution. This is the interrelation between the objective and the subjective aspects of the revolutionary process through the stages of its maturing — from the initial economic disruption of society, through the stages of the destruction of what held society together, to the point of such general instability that political revolution is possible. The outcome of revolution depends, above all, on the consciousness of the combatants. Understanding the quantitative stages of the objective aspects of the revolutionary process allows revolutionaries to aim and focus their efforts to develop the subjective aspects of the process.

### **Implications for Today**

The current epoch provides a rich context in which to see how this works. Today, labor-replacing technology is being applied to production within an economic system that is premised on the buying and selling of labor power. The introduction of this qualitatively new technology initiates the step-by-step destruction of the connection between the working class and the capitalist class and everything that stands on the capitalist system of exploitation. But the consciousness required to build a new society will not grow automatically from that social destruction and social struggle. To ensure the outcome of the social revolution already underway, we need to introduce the qualitatively new ideas of revolution and the reconstruction of society.

Like other concepts in philosophy, the question of quantity and quality helps us navigate our way through various problems that have historically confronted revolutionaries. For example, an understanding of quantity and quality helps explain why the simple intensification of the social struggle doesn't lead to political revolution. The relation of quantity and quality is indispensable to helping revolutionaries identify the actual stages and steps in the line of march of the revolution of our time and the tasks of revolutionaries at each of those stages.

### Discussion Questions and Readings

1. Define quality. Define quantity. Is "quantity" simply "amount"? What do we mean by the quantitative stages of development of the process?

#### Readings

- Frederick Engels, "II. Dialectics," *Dialectics of Nature*. (From "It is therefore, from the history" to "all his life without the slightest inkling of it.")  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch02.htm>
- J.V. Stalin, "Anarchism or Socialism?," *Collected Works*, Vol. 1. (See "The Dialectical Method.") <http://www.marx2mao.com/Stalin/AS07.html> (pp. 300-304, especially 303-304)
- Nelson Peery, "Dialectics: Quantity, Quality and the Antagonistic Element," *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*. (pp. 12-13 in printed text)
- The Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," *Institute Resource Paper, #3*. (From "Early on" to "wherein one quality is transformed into another.")
- Miller, Steven. "Water, Ice and Steam – How Changes in Quantity Lead to Changes in Quality." (Section "Hydrogen Bonds"; Section "Development" from "The laws of dialectics" to "cause the leap to take place.")

2. What is the relation between quantity and quality? How is that relation reciprocal? Discuss the distinction and relation between quantitative development based on

contradiction and the quantitative stages of the leap based on the introduction of a new quality into the old process?

### Readings

- Frederick Engels, "XII. Dialectics. Quantity and Quality," Anti-Duhring, <http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/AD78i.html> (pp. 160-163)
- Frederick Engels, "Causality" and "Reciprocal Action," Dialectics of Nature, pp. 144-146. Frederick Engels, "On the Mechanical Conception of Nature," Dialectics of Nature, pp. 147-150. <http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philo/texts/engels2.pdf>
- Beth Gonzalez, "Our Philosophical Outlook and the Line of March" (See section on quantity and quality.)
- Nelson Peery, "Dialectics: Quantity, Quality and the Antagonistic Element." Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution (pp. 12-13 in printed text)
- The Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," Institute Resource Paper, #3. (From "Early on" to "wherein one quality is transformed into another.")
- Miller, Steven. "Water, Ice and Steam – How Changes in Quantity Lead to Changes in Quality," 2002 (Section "Hydrogen Bonds"; Section "Development" from "The laws of dialectics" to "cause the leap to take place.")

3. Describe the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the growth of the productive forces that finally led to the "bursting asunder" of the feudal relations of production.

### Readings

- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," The Communist Manifesto. (Esp., "The history of all" to "and of exchange."; "The bourgeoisie" to "and its rule.") <http://www.marx.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>
- Karl Marx, "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

("The general result" to "human history to a close.")

4. Choose the historical situation described in one of these three readings:

#### Readings

- Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India," June 10, 1853, pp. 35-41.
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," *The Communist Manifesto*. (Esp., "The history of all" to "and of exchange."; "The bourgeoisie" to "and its rule.") <http://www.marx.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>
- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "Historical Materialism: The Civil War in the United States," Institute Resource Paper #9.
- Use that example from history to discuss the relation of quantity and quality in change: How does the quantitative introduction of a new quality lead up to its incompatibility with the old? In what part of the process does the quantity of the new quality begin to grow? How does it finally become incompatible with the old?

For specific reference on the concepts of quantity and quality, see:

- Beth Gonzalez, "Our Philosophical Outlook and the Line of March." (See section on quantity and quality.)
- Frederick Engels, "II. Dialectics," *Dialectics of Nature*. ("It is therefore, from the history" to "all his life without the slightest inkling of it.") <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch02.htm>
- Nelson Peery, "The Dialectics of the Leap and the Destruction of Capitalism." [Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution](#) (See especially beginning of article to end of paragraph beginning "Each invading quantity of the new quality." The article can be found at the end of the *Epoch* pamphlet; pp. 31-35 in the print version.)

5. Through the quantitative stages of the leap, the introduction of a new quality destroys the connections in society (e.g., between the capitalist class and the working class).

Discuss the significance of this for the preparation for political revolution within the social revolution.

- Beth Gonzalez, "Our Philosophical Outlook and the Line of March." (See section on quantity and quality.)
- Michael Brand, "Dialectics, Complexity and the Crisis," 1996. ("The conception of development" to "complexity and Marxist dialectics.")

6. Why doesn't the intensification of the social struggle become the political struggle for power? What does it mean to say we anticipate and rely on objective aspects of the revolution in order to develop its subjective/conscious side? Use the understanding of quantity and quality to discuss this.

- Beth Gonzalez, "Our Philosophical Outlook and the Line of March." (See section on quantity and quality.)
- Nelson Peery, "The Revolutionary Process," Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution. (pp. 17-20 in the print version.)

#### 4. THE LEAP: THE MOTION OF QUALITATIVE CHANGE THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL REVOLUTION

We have seen that a new quality must be introduced for transformation to begin. Yet even this process of transformation has its own motion which revolutionaries must understand. This process is called the leap.

A leap is the motion of change from one quality to another. It is not a single event, but a series of changes wherein one quality is replaced quantitatively, or stage by stage, with another quality. What is single and sudden is the break in continuity. It is highly chaotic and immensely unstable. It is the process of the old quality being destroyed and the struggle to reorganize around the new quality.



## Implications for Today

Today we can see this process in society unfolding before our eyes. The introduction of the new quality – electronics – into production has begun a leap in the economy. These new productive forces are increasingly coming into conflict with the productive relations of society, laying the basis for a leap in society and expressed as a social revolution. Institutions, ideas, and relationships that once organized and gave meaning to society are disrupted and torn from their moorings. The struggle to reorganize society around the new productive forces is fought out within this social revolution.

The thinking of the masses of people -- if not necessarily each individual person -- reflect the material conditions. Change these material conditions and the masses of people become open to new ideas that conform to the emerging new conditions. The direction and outcome of the leap is decided by what people think and what they do about what they think.

Under these conditions, the subjective aspects become decisive. Therefore, the task of revolutionaries is to guarantee that an intellectual leap takes place as a reflection of the leap in the objective sphere. Revolutionary activity in the spontaneous movement is no longer an end to itself. The practical movement becomes the battleground for the struggle between the old and new ideas. Our understanding of the quantitative development of the leap shows us the necessity and the rhythm of preparing the masses of people, step by step, for revolution.

## Discussion Questions and Readings

1. What is the leap?
2. Discuss the two ideas of transformation addressed in the readings. What are the political implications of the concept that change occurs by "degrees"? What are some examples of this thinking? What are the political implications of the concept that change occurs through a break in continuity, or leaps?

Readings

- (under construction) O. Kuusinen, "What is a leap?" Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism. <http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philosophy/texts/leap.html>
- (under construction) G. Plekhanov, "The Materialist Dialectic as Method," Fundamental Problems of Marxism. <http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philosophy/texts/plekhanov2.html>
- F. Engels, "Natural Philosophy. The Organic World," Anti-Duhring. ("Despite all the gradualness" to "Hegel who has to correct Herr Duhring.") <http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/AD78i.html#s2> (pp. 82-83)
- Supplemental: J. Madeleine Nash, "When Life Exploded," Time, December 4, 1995. (This article is available for purchase from the Time web site at address below. It costs \$2.50.)

3. How is the leap we are in today different from other leaps in history? Compare "The End of Value" with the selection from The Communist Manifesto and the excerpt from Capital. What similarities do you see?

#### Readings

- (under construction) Jim Davis, "The End of Value." (Institute discussion paper)
- K. Marx and F. Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," *The Communist Manifesto*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>
- K. Marx, Part VII: "Primitive Accumulation, Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation." Capital, Vol. I. ("What does the primitive" to "a few usurpers by the mass of the people.") <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch32.htm>

4. Describe the "law system" of revolutionary work during the period of capitalist stability. Discuss this in terms of quantitative development and qualitative transformation.

5. Discuss the concept of stages of development of the leap. How does it help us understand the process of the leap from one quality to another? What does it tell us about how revolutionaries must approach their work?
6. Discuss the following: "Our task is to guarantee that an intellectual leap takes place as a reflection of the leap in the objective sphere."

#### Readings

- N. Peery, "The Process of Development," Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution. (pp. 10-11 in published text)
- N. Peery, "The Dialectics of the Leap and the Destruction of Capitalism." (The article can be found at the end of Epoch pamphlet, pp. 31-35 in the print version)
- Institute Resource Paper #3, "Why Things Change." (Section "How [people] fight it out to establish new productive relations.")
- Institute Resource paper # 6, "Revolution -- The Line of March."

## 5. POLARIZATION: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD CONNECTIONS AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR THE NEW QUALITY

All phenomena are comprised of opposing poles which are mutually exclusive and interdependent, and in contradiction. This polarity — the relation between the two poles — organizes them and makes them what they are, a quality.

Growth and development occurs as a result of the contradiction and struggle between the two poles. The relation between the poles becomes more contradictory within each stage of development, forcing the emergence of a new stage.

Yet this process of growth and development is different from the process of change and transformation. Change cannot come about simply by the poles struggling and fighting one another. The process of the poles struggling and fighting one another is the process of ongoing growth and development. The process of change and transformation requires something else: the introduction of a new quality which begins the process of destruction of the old quality and the possibility of the formation of something new.

Polarization means the process of the opposing poles being wrenched apart in an ongoing process which destroys that which holds them together and that which made them what they were. Polarization begins with the introduction of the new quality and makes possible the leap to a new quality, or in terms of what we are looking at, a new society. They are not separate categories but part of a long process of struggle, destruction, and transformation on a new basis.

This is as true for the natural world as it is for society. In chemical reactions, for example, the introduction of energy into the bond-forming electrons causes the bond to rupture, creating "opportunities...for new bonds to form."

With the introduction of qualitatively new productive forces we see the beginning of the destruction of the classes, the institutions and relationships that developed on the old material basis. Every political revolution has been characterized by polarization. As these relations are torn apart, the "opportunity for new bonds to form" begins. Faced with the fraying bonds that once held it together, all of society is pulled into the process. It is in such times of motion and change that revolutionaries can play their historical role.

### **Implications for Today**

The concept of polarization holds profound lessons for revolutionaries. Production without labor is forming a class with no ties to the capitalist system. They cannot fight the capitalists in the same ways as they once did because their connection to production is dissolving. This opens up the possibility of politics on a new basis and, with it, the possibility of reconstructing society on a new basis. It is the development of the new class subjectively that makes the difference in the direction that society takes. Conscious revolutionaries concentrate on developing the consciousness about the actual process going on — what the problem is, a vision of what the world could be, and a program for revolution to reconstruct society.

### **Discussion Questions and Readings**

1. Describe the process of polarization. How is it set in motion?
2. Discuss the significance of polarization in the process of change in nature and in society.
3. Why is it important for revolutionaries to understand the process of polarization as it relates to the revolutionary process?

### **Readings**

- F. Engels, "Basic Forms of Motion," *Dialectics of Nature*. ("Heat, as already stated" to "repelled from one to another.")
- F. Engels, selection from *Anti-Duhring*. ("The mechanical theory" to "obsolete and unsuitable.") [http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/AD78i.html#s2\(pp.79-80\)](http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/AD78i.html#s2(pp.79-80))

- "Chemical Reactions," excerpted from Encyclopedia Britannica  
Online. <http://www.britannica.com> (full text available only through subscription)

4. Through looking at past revolutions we can examine the process of polarization and how it plays out in the realm of society and politics. Using the example of the French revolution, identify economic, social and political polarization and the relationship between them. Look also at the role of ideas. Compare that revolution to the revolutionary process today. What is the same? What is different?

5. What does "politics" mean? What do we mean by "politics on a new basis"? What are some of the blocks to this, and why? Give examples from your own experience. What role will a class party play in the development of this new kind of politics, and what is its relation to the reconstruction of society?

#### Readings

- Nelson Peery, "The Revolutionary Process," Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution. (pp. 17-18; 19-20 in print version)
- Nelson Peery, "Polarization - Basis for a Workers Party." (pp. 39-43 in print version of Epoch pamphlet. The article is included at the end of the Epoch pamphlet.
- LRNA, Political Resolution, 2001. ("The ruling class acts as a class" to end of document)
- (under construction) LRNA, Political Report to the LRNA Steering Committee, "The Tasks of the Comrades in the Mass Movement," May 2000. <http://www.lrna.org/texts/reports/pr00052.html>
- (under construction) E.J. Hobsbawm, "The French Revolution," excerpt from The Age of Revolution.

## 6. BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE: SOCIETY – HOW AND WHY TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE

A common misconception about Marxism is that it is "economic determinist." That is, everything that happens in society is determined by the means of production in some kind of automatic way. In their writings, Marx and Engels showed the relation between the base of society and the edifice – the superstructure – which arose upon that foundation. While they emphasized the underlying role that the productive forces played in any process of social change, all their writings are based on an understanding that political change could only occur through the conscious intervention of human beings.

Let's look at this conceptual framework of base and superstructure a little closer. The base of society is the way people relate to one another in the production of their lives and their means of life, in other words, the productive relations. Classes are an aspect of these productive relations. People do not relate on just any basis. They relate to one another through their mutual relation to property. This in turn defines the society. A state, a legal system, social institutions, and ideas arise on this base. These elements make up what we call the superstructure. The superstructure reflects, protects, organizes and strengthens the base.

The leap in society begins with the introduction of qualitatively new productive forces. The leap is a series of changes wherein one quality is replaced quantitatively, or stage by stage, by another quality. Revolution is not simply the overthrow of one class by another, but rather the disruption and destruction of the entire society brought about by the introduction of the new quality. The base begins to disintegrate, and new relationships struggle to be born. New groups or new classes are created, unable to exist in the old productive relations.

While a qualitative change in the productive forces begins the process of destruction and polarization, it is the subjective element – consciousness – which determines the final outcome of the social and political forms. The Soviet Union and the US went through the same economic transition, but there was no organization in the US – no subjective movement that was capable of taking advantage of these changes in the same way as the

Bolsheviks did in Russia in the early 20th century. It is then, as Marx and Engels pointed out, the complex and at times violent interplay of these various forces that determine the outcome, not simply one side or the other of the dialectic. In this sense, we can say that the character of productive relations is determined by force during the leap or transition from one quality to another. That is, by which class will command the political means of control.

### **Implications for Today**

Today, as the relations that have held society together are destroyed, so too is the relation between the bourgeoisie and the worker broken. The workers can no longer fight the capitalists because labor-replacing technology is breaking the connection to production. The struggle becomes one over the political means of control.

Human beings, on the basis of their understanding, struggle and fight to create a new society that conforms to what the new means of production make possible. The outcome is not automatic. In the process of social revolution, all kinds of ideas and movements are generated, each going through the same process of polarization and dissolution. This is as true for fascist ideas and movement as it is for communist.

Once again, the methodology of Marxism shows us the pivotal role that revolutionaries can and must play in influencing the outcome of the leap toward a society that is based on cooperation and a sharing of the fruits of human civilization.

### **Discussion Questions and Readings**

1. Discuss the concept of base and superstructure.
  - a.) What relations make up the base? Discuss the process through which it is created. Use examples from the readings.
  - b.) What makes up the superstructure? Discuss the process through which it is created. Why do Marx and Engels say "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ideas of the ruling class?"



2. What misconceptions about base and superstructure were Engels and Plekhanov attempting to straighten out? Why is this important?

### Readings

- F. Engels, "Morality and Law, Eternal Truths," Anti-Duhring. (From "If then, we have not made" to "but also for cats!")<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch07.htm>
- F. Engels to Joseph Bloch, September 1890.[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90\\_09\\_21.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm)
- K. Marx to P.V. Annenkov, December 1846.[http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1846/letters/46\\_12\\_28.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1846/letters/46_12_28.htm)
- K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. (From "Legitimists and Orleanists" to "enthusiastic only about ground rent.")  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch03.htm>
- K. Marx, "Preface" to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. ("The general result" to "human history to a close.")
- G. Plekhanov, "Man and Necessity in History," Fundamental Problems of Marxism, pp. 68-69. ("As we see Herr Bernstein" to "claiming to be a science.")

3. Discuss the different stages of history and the distinction between the content of a time (manual to mechanical labor, etc.) and political forms (communal, feudal, etc.). Why is it important to distinguish between these two aspects? How does the example of Soviet society show that productive forces do not determine property relations or the character of a society? How does this show the interplay of the objective and the subjective aspects of the process?

4. Discuss the concept that the character of the productive relations is not determined by the productive forces, but is determined by force during the leap or transition from one quality to another. What do we mean by force?
5. Discuss the conditions which shift the struggle from an economic struggle to a political one. Why does this occur? Why does this open up the possibility for revolutionaries to play their role?

### Readings

- K. Marx and F. Engels, "Bourgeois and Proletarians," The Communist Manifesto. (From "The history of all hitherto existing society" to "political sway of the bourgeoisie.") <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>
- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "How and Why Things Change," Institute Resource Paper #3. (Section beginning "Basis and Superstructure" to end of paper.)
- Nelson, Peery, "Content of the Time" and "The Revolutionary Process," *Entering and Epoch of Social Revolution*, pp. 13-15; 17-20 in print version)

## 7. THE MAKING OF HISTORY AND THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In the class on base and superstructure, we saw how objective material changes make certain changes in society possible and, at the same time, how the direction and outcome of those changes isn't automatic. People fight out and determine the resolution of those objective changes. The class struggle is the struggle for the political power to determine the resolution of the material changes. In this sense, it is people who determine the shape and direction history takes.

The concept of the "role of the individual" defines the place of the individual within the objective, material processes going on in the world and identifies his or her active role in the process. The individual whose particular character offers what is required of a given stage or moment of history moves history forward, influences the forms it takes, and offers the context for the masses of people to play their role in the making of history.

Recognition of the role of the individual in history is a statement of responsibility. It calls on each individual to understand the material changes and the laws inherent in them, and it underlines the importance of consciousness in the revolutionary process. It calls on each of us to play our role in determining the direction and outcome of change.

### **Implications for Today**

Appreciating how history is made and the role of the individual is especially important today, when society is in a profound leap from one material basis to another. In such a leap, the old material foundations for social relationships, institutions and people's thinking are destroyed. But the outcome of this destruction – the construction of the new — depends on the consciousness and conscious action of people. Today, the development of labor-replacing methods of production is an antagonism to capitalist relations of production. It sets the basis for an objective movement whose actual – though not necessarily conscious – aim is the communist reconstruction of society. Developing the communist ideology of an objectively communist movement is the order of the day. Those revolutionaries with the understanding, inclination and passion to develop that

communist ideology on a mass scale play the essential role in moving history forward.

### Readings

- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "Revolutionaries – The Role of the Individual," Institute Resource Paper #5.
- Frederick Engels to Heinz Starkenburg, January 25, 1894. [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894/letters/94\\_01\\_25.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894/letters/94_01_25.htm)
- George Plekhanov, excerpt from The Materialist Conception of History. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/works/1890s/history/part1.htm>
- George Plekhanov, "Section III" and "Section VIII," The Role of the Individual in History. <http://art-bin.com/art/oplecheng.html> (Find Sections III and VIII)
- George Plekhanov, "Man and Necessity in History," Fundamental Problems of Marxism, pp. 66-70.
- Frederick Engels, "Causality" and "Reciprocal Action," Dialectics of Nature, pp. 144-146.
- Frederick Engels to Joseph Bloch, September 21, 1890. [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90\\_09\\_21.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm)
- Readings strongly suggested – at least for reports:
  - Michio Kaku, *Visions — How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century*, Bantam Books, 1998, Chapter 1.
  - Henry Mayer, "Preface," *All on Fire – William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*, New York: St. Martins Griffen, 1998.

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Engels' and Hegel's definition of "freedom."
2. What's the difference between "automatic" and "inevitable"?

3. The development of the productive forces is the underlying, general cause of the historical progress of humanity. What is the role of the individual in history? (For this question, have someone do a report on Henry Mayer, "Preface," *All on Fire - William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*.)
4. Engels says that "freedom is also a product of historical development." What does that mean, and what kind of "freedom" is possible today? (For this question, have someone do a report on Michio Kaku, *Visions — How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century*, Chapter 1.)
5. Plekhanov says that the "history we make is the history of our own social relations." Discuss what that means.

## 8. NEW EPOCH CALLS FOR NEW DOCTRINE

For revolutionaries, doctrine is a general policy or set of principles that guides political activity to accomplish a definite political goal. But doctrine isn't just a subjective choice. It is based on the conclusions of the science of society: a definition of the specific set of inherent, objective laws that govern the objective process you are dealing with and how the operation of those laws is manifested in changes in society. Science allows us to understand the world. Doctrine is a guide to changing it.

Developing and using doctrine to define and shape the work of revolutionaries depends on a philosophical understanding of how change takes place: Change doesn't come about through a mechanical increase or decrease of numbers or intensity. Qualitative change depends on the introduction of something new into an ongoing process. The outcome of material, objective changes in society depends on the consciousness and conscious activity of people.

The epoch Marx and Engels (and many others after them) wrote about was defined by the shift from an agrarian society to an industrial society. The electronic revolution and the beginning of laborless production define our epoch. It is different in fundamental ways from the past epoch.

In the period Marx and Engels described, the clash between the social character of production and the private ownership of the means of production expressed itself in various economic crises within capitalism. Marx and Engels rallied their comrades to take advantage of every economic and political crisis in order to advance their class and political goals. But crisis in their epoch was a product of the internal contradictions of capitalism, contradictions that moved capitalism ahead. Quantitative changes within capitalism could resolve or overcome those crises.

Today we face something qualitatively different. The beginning of production without labor (that is, the beginning of valueless production) represents the emergence of an antagonism that is external to capitalism (which is defined by the buying and selling of

labor power). Today it is not so much the social character of production, but more so the beginning of a new quality – "laborless" production – that clashes with capitalist forms of private property.

Marx and Engels faced a situation in which the interests of the working class were opposed to those of the capitalist class, but the working class was locked into the system defined by the interdependence of the two hostile classes. The connections between the capitalist class and the working class were growing and strengthening. By contrast, today new methods of production are undermining and destroying those connections. The back-and-forth struggle between the working class and the capitalist class cannot reform the capitalist system to solve the questions of the day. Thus, today we face the social consequences of a system in the process of destruction – not the growing pains of an expanding and developing system.

The universal and timeless responsibility of revolutionaries is to develop the subjective aspects of the revolutionary process. Doctrine is a general guide for carrying out this responsibility and advancing the revolution along its line of march. The emergence of a new epoch calls for the development of new doctrine..

### **Readings**

- Institute for the Study of the Science of Society, "New Epoch Calls for New Doctrine," Institute Resource Paper #10.  
<http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philo/texts/doctrine.html>
- (under construction) Some Useful Definitions – Reference for "New Epoch calls for New Doctrine."  
<http://www.scienceofsociety.org/philo/texts/doctrine.definitions.html>
- V.I. Lenin, Excerpt from Karl Marx. ("Motion, in its turn" to "twenty years concentrated.") <http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/KM14.html> (p. 41)

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the relation between "science" and "doctrine."
2. What is the difference between Marx's epoch and ours? Discuss this in relation to the difference between, on the one hand, contradiction as the basis for quantitative stages of growth and, on the other hand, antagonism as the basis for the process of the leap from one quality to another.
3. From the standpoint of the discussion of point #2, why does a new epoch call for new doctrine? Discuss the difference between Marx's doctrine of the class struggle and today's doctrine of the leap.
4. Compare a conception like "unite to fight the right" with a dialectical conception of how change takes place. What does this mean for doctrine in this epoch?