

Marx's dialectical position

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Hegel explains dialectic method in a spiritualistic way, whereas Marx explains dialectic method in a materialistic way. Marx in his book *Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right*, says that Hegel's dialectic is idealist whereas his conception of dialectic is materialistic. The distinction is based on their different views on the nature of contradiction. He says that, "My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but its direct opposite. To Hegel...the process of thinking which, under the name of 'the idea' he even transforms into an independent subject is the demiurges (creator) of the world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the idea', with me, on the contrary, the 'ideal' is nothing else that the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought"¹. Thus for Marx the ultimate source of the laws of dialectic lies in the philosophical materialism.

Marx's dialectic is motivated by the contradictory character of reality. Different from Hegel, the ultimate basis of the contradiction, for Marx, is philosophical materialism, and on this foundation, the achievement of dialectic is imposed. Marx tries to analyze the contradictory nature of the system of production from philosophical perspective. His theory is a theory of social change which asks why social changes take place and how do this change come into effect. The changes take place because of the material factors and they can be know through a method called 'dialectical materialistic' method. He maintained that class struggle has marked all history but the contenders have been changing. In the historical phenomenon, the economic factor plays a significant role. Thus human history is the record of human struggle to dominate the environment and the men around them. According to him, human being is alienated from human essence. Human being becomes a slave to the system of production. He offered historical

¹ Marx, k., *capital*, vol, I, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. xxx.

materialism as a general theory for studying the capitalistic mode of production, it also explains political and social change.

Marx starts his theory with historical fact, which exposes the materialistic character of the society. He critically examines the relation between consciousness and social existence. For him, use-value and exchange-value have different kinds of nature. Use-value has qualitative nature and the exchange-value has quantitative nature. Things are made not to be use-values but to be use-values as a means to exchange-value. For him, the capitalistic economy has its origin in the two-fold nature of commodity. In a capitalist society the laborer has no authority on the means of production. He works like a machine and he is reduced to the level of a commodity which can be sold or purchased. He has no sense of self-fulfillment from his work. The worker becomes a slave of his work. His own labour becomes something alien to him. He always feels that the product of his labour does not belong to him, it is someone else's. He works according to the instructions of others and his work, according to Marx, he feels the loss of himself. He says that, ".....the object which labour produces-labour's product-confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labour appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement, as alienation*"².

Marx's concept of alienation takes off from the basic idea that it is a systematic result of capitalism. His theory of alienation is founded upon his observation that within the capitalist mode of production, worker invariably loses determination of their lives. Workers are alienated from the production of his labour. He argues that, in a capitalist society, the worker is alienated from the production of his labour, because it does not belong to him but belong to somebody else. The competitive nature of capitalism also alienates the worker from his fellow workers. He says that, "The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as

² Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 68.

something hostile and alien”³. The result of alienation is that workers never become autonomous, self realized human beings.

Thus in a society there are two classes – the property owners and the propertyless workers. He says that, “ ...Political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; and that finally the distinction between capitalist and land rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes-the *property owners* and the propertyless *workers*”⁴.

According to Marx, all things and processes are in a state of development. For him, conflict is the core of all society. In a society, the labourers are exploited. For this reason, there arises a contradiction between labourer and capitalists. Through this contradiction new society developed. For him, the contradiction between labourer and capitalists are removing with the help of dialectical method. Through this process the labour class makes a new society, where exploitation can remove and wages are distributed equally.

Marx divided the modes of production into five types-Primitive, communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist. The means of production are owned by the society in primitive economic mode. In communal stage, the slave-owner owns the means of production. In the third form the feudal lord partially owns it. In capitalism the capitalist own the means of production. In socialism the labourers own the means of production and contradiction being abolished the production reaches its fullest development. Every new stage accepts a value that it had negated earlier. The aim of Hegelian dialectic is to reach at the Absolute Spirit. But the goal of Marx dialectical method is to establish a classless society. For Marx, the society is divided into two classes, one, which controls the means of production and the other, doesn't. The process is possible because of this contradiction, which is through the conflict of thesis, antithesis giving rise to synthesis. For Marx, the force behind the social development is due to class struggle.

³ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

According to Marx, the capitalist wants to get more and more profit and in the process exploits the worker. This exploitation forces worker to revolt against the capitalist. The destruction of capitalism lies within the capitalistic mode of production. Marx says that, “The fact that bourgeois production is compelled by its own immanent laws, on the one hand, to develop the productive forces as it production did not take place on a narrow, restricted social foundation, while on the other hand, it can develop these forces only within these narrow limits, is the deepest and most hidden cause of crises, of the crying contradictions within which bourgeoisie production is carried on and which, even at a cursory glance, reveal it only as a transitional, historical form”⁵.

⁵ Marx, (1972), *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. 3 trans by Renate Simpson, London: Lawrence & Wishart, p. 84.