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Beyond Idealism and Materialism: Hegel's Concept of Dialectic and Marx's Critique of Hegel's 'Mystifications'

A couple of days after Marx's death (March 14, 1883), on April 2 1883, Frederick Engels wrote to Pyotr Lavrov, the Russian Narodniki, that he will have a look on Marx's manuscripts to search and find an outline of dialectics, which Marx had planned to write a long time ago.¹ This manuscript was never found and probably it never existed. But the search for an equivalent to this outline has never ended until now. It looks like a great treasure, the Holy Grail, could be found: an alternative concept of dialectic, just opposite to the Hegelian concept, a materialistic concept of dialectic, not idealistic but scientific, revolutionary, without any mysticism. Though not all theoreticians of the international socialist movement were interested in dialectics – for example the revisionists and the Austrian Marxists – many Marxists were blinded by the prospect of finding this treasure. If there was no manuscript to find in Marx's estate, every Marxist interested in dialectics must write his own by studying Marx's *application* of Hegel's dialectical method, especially in his main work, the *Capital*. In Lenin's words, in his *Conspectus of Hegel's 'Science of Logic'* from 1914: "If Marx did not leave behind him a '*Logic*' (with a capital letter), he did leave the logic of *Capital*, and this ought to be utilized to the full in this question. In *Capital*, Marx applied to a single science logic, dialectics and the theory of knowledge of materialism [three words are not needed: it is one and the same thing] which has taken everything valuable in Hegel and developed it further."² This was the birth-certificate of the Hegelian Marxism in the 20th century, and, because of Stalin's elimination of the early soviet Hegelians, the starting point of the so called Western Marxism.

Hundred years later we have many books and essays on materialist dialectics, but nearly as many different and often contradicting concepts as authors. Why? On the first glance one can see that all these concepts proclaim the materialistic foundation of Marx's dialectics (whatever this may be) on the one side, on the other side they use the Hegelian concepts (Begriffe) in the context of Hegel's Science of Logic, – certainly with reservations against his supposed idealistic concept of concept (Begriff des Begriffs), but nonetheless in a form, determined

¹ Cf. K. Marx/F. Engels, *Collected Works*, London 2010, vol. 47, 3.

² V. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow 1976, vol. 38, 317.