



DIALECTIC IN MARX

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis is a study in the interpretation of Marx's Dialectic. Its aim is to show that Marx has a model of the structure of what might be termed 'organic systems' which is employed to explain constancy and change in social structures. This model constitutes Marx's 'dialectic'. I propose to show that failure to understand this model has led many critics of Marx's theory of society into a fundamental misunderstanding of Marx's theory of historical materialism, his theory of capitalism and his theory of social revolution. Once this misunderstanding is exposed, it becomes clear that a central theme of the philosophical critique of Marxism has no substance. Many of the objections to Marxism, such as those recently rehearsed in Jon Elster's book, *Making Sense of Marx*, are shown to be baseless. The importance of this project is that it shows that a viable Marxist research program remains once simplistic interpretations are cleared away.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I discuss the question of whether Marx's dialectic involves the claim that there are contradictions in reality in some sense or other. I argue that this question is relatively unimportant in Marx's philosophy. What is important to Marx is the causal postulate that there are systems constituted as 'identities of opposites' which have a tendency to become other than what they are as a result of conflicts inherent in their nature. In the second chapter, I show that Hegel and Marx have different conceptions of an identity of opposites, with Hegel's conception shaped by his 'speculative' standpoint, and Marx's shaped by his materialism. I show that Marx sees the elements of organic systems as opposites, united not by an Hegelian teleology which they serve to realize, but by each being a systematic presupposition and result of other, opposite, elements. In the third chapter, I compare and contrast Marx's model of an unity of opposites with those of Kant and Hegel. The last three chapters use this model to clarify and develop Marx's theory of historical materialism, his theory of capitalism and his theory of revolution.