

PHILOSOPHY

Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Covering: Introduction—Opening Lesson.

Philosophical Materialism—2 Lessons.

Dialectical Materialism—2 Lessons.

Historical Materialism—2 Lessons.

Material: Politzer: "An Elementary Course in Philosophy."

Stalin: "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" (in CPSU, Problems of Leninism, Sharkey's book and a pamphlet).

Zhdanov: "On the History of Philosophy."

Blake: "A Government of National Betrayal," Communist Review, March, 1950.

"The Party Branch and the Political Struggle," Communist Review, May, 1950.

WHY THIS SUBJECT?

"We consider that the militant worker must possess a method of analysis and of correct reasoning in order to be able to carry out correct revolutionary action. He needs a method that is not a dogma, supplying ready-made solutions, but one which takes account of facts and circumstances which are never the same, a method which never separates theory from practice, reasoning from life. Now, this method is to be found in the philosophy, dialectical materialism, which we propose to explain." (Poltzer.)

HOW TO STUDY?

The main thing is to read the material; read it more than once. Plan your time to read it thoroughly—not just half an hour before a class; it is impossible to learn that way.

Think, what does it mean to me in my work, in my union, on the job, in the daily struggle?

Use the outline as a guide to the whole study.

Because we are workers, classes, with discussion among ourselves, will assist us to do this.

Remember, right through the course, these two guides:

"Nature is the test of dialectics." (Engels.)

"The philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." (Marx.)

Always look for the proof in nature—always work out what it means to-day in the struggle against war, against capitalism.

And as you learn daily, test it out in the daily struggle, for: "The bond between science and practical activity, between theory and practice, their unity, should be the guiding star of the party of the proletariat." (Stalin.)

Opening Night

Talk by tutor, followed by questions and discussion, along the following lines:—

What is philosophy: why we study it; the basic need for unity of theory and practice in all Communist work; how we violate this principle; how to realise it in practice.

The basic question of all philosophy: what is primary, mind or matter. What is matter, the splitting of philosophy into two main camps; the scientific meaning as against the vulgar bourgeois misrepresentation of both; the history of philosophy as the history of the struggle of materialism against idealism; the fundamental partisan character of philosophy; the base of idealism—ignorance; the base of materialism—science, knowledge; idealism's early victory over materialism because of the lack of scientific knowledge; the ruling class's use, throughout history, of idealism, ignorance, to maintain its power; the strengthening of materialism as scientific knowledge expands, to the revolution in philosophy; with the discovery of Marxist Dialectical Materialism, the scientific philosophy of the proletarian masses in their struggle for emancipation from capitalism; the triumph of Marxist Dialectical Materialism over idealism; the ruling class's tactics against the spread of Dialectical Materialism; the campaign of silence, the campaign of lies and distortion, the campaign of physical extermination in

fascism and war; the re-asserting and strengthening of Dialectical Materialism as ever expanding masses of workers and colonial fighters learn from Materialism's great store of knowledge, spread these scientific truths, and act on these truths to end capitalism and build socialism.

How do we decide our policy? Why is the struggle for peace the centre of all our activity? How do we test out our theory, our policy, in practice?

The dialectical method, the direct opposite of metaphysics. (Don't elaborate this as yet.)

The extension of Dialectical Materialism to the study of the history of society, ending once and for all the bourgeois "explanation" of history as an agglomeration of "accidents"; and, to the terror of the bourgeoisie; making real history quite knowable for the masses, and the study of history and precise science.

"The teaching of Marx is all powerful because it is true." (Lenin.)

How to study during the course: Procedure—6 lessons; material for the whole course.

Material For Opening Night

To be read by tutor and by students, where possible, before the night.

This Outline	Page 1.
Politzer	Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 13-27.
Zhdanov	Pp. 7-18, 31-36.
Blake	Communist Review, March and May, 1950.

Lesson 1

PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIALISM (1)

(The direct opposite of philosophical idealism.)

Material: Politzer: Introduction and Chapter 2, pp. 13-27 (if not already read); Part II, in full, 63-95.
Blake: C.R.'s, March and May, 1950 (if not already read).
Stalin: "On Philosophical Materialism," CPSU, 111-117.
Zhdanov: Pp. 7-18; 33-36 (if not already read).

Tutors should prepare thoroughly and be prepared to lead the discussion along the following lines:—

The basic question of all philosophy: What is primary, mind or matter; what is matter. Does matter exist in space and time?

What does it mean to be a materialist? Why is the unity of theory and practice fundamental to all Communist work? How we violate this principle. How to realise it in practice? Is it possible to study daily? How do we decide our policy? Why is the struggle for peace the centre of all our activity? How do we test out our theory?

The collective principle of Communist work as opposed to the bourgeois idealist principle of individualism. How the sectarians, individualists, egotists, arrogant people, doctrinaires, idle dreamers, carping critics—are idealists,

how they hinder and finally destroy all constructive revolutionary work.

The limitations of pre-Marxist materialism; why 18th century materialism, the philosophy of the rising bourgeoisie, was mechanical; its limitations; the bond between materialism and science.

What historically gave rise to Dialectical Materialism? Dialectical Materialism as a revolution in philosophy; a method of scientific investigation differing from all previous philosophical systems; a continually developing philosophy; a philosophy embraced by millions in struggle against capitalism, to build socialism.

Lesson 2

PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIALISM (2)

(The direct opposite of philosophical idealism.)

Material: Politzer: Part I, in full, pp. 21-95.
Stalin: Repeat—On Philosophical Materialism, CPSU, 111-117.

GUIDE.

Again, the basic question of all philosophy; what is primary, mind or matter?

The base of idealism—ignorance; the base of materialism—science, knowledge; the history of philosophy as the history of the struggle of materialism against idealism; idealism's early victory over materialism because of the lack of scientific knowledge; the ruling class's use, throughout history, of idealism; ignorance, to maintain its power; the origin and role of religion; the strengthening of materialism as scientific knowledge expands. Origin

and significance of ideas (Stalin, CPSU, 115-117) fully dealt with in Lesson 6.

The objective existence of reality:

How does practice prove that we do know reality? Making reality. How does science prove that materialism is right. Again, the importance of practice, the fundamental unity of theory and practice.

Why does the so-called "third philosophy" lead to idealism?

(Note re P. 33: Separation of primary and secondary qualities is a mechanical separation.

(Note re P. 92. Top paragraph note that this does not apply to ruling class in a Socialist or People's Democratic country.

Lesson 3

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM (1)

(The direct opposite of metaphysics.)

Material: Politzer: Part IV., Chapter 1-3, on 2 laws of dialectics.
Part III., pp. 99-107, on 3 characteristics of metaphysics.
Stalin: CPSU, pp. 105-107, on 2 laws of dialectics.

(Note: Stalin and Politzer deal with these two laws in different order.)

GUIDE.

The origin of metaphysics: Why metaphysical method dominant for so long: limited knowledge of sciences: need for classification to extend knowledge, leading to metaphysics: 18th Century materialism inevitably metaphysical.

Why Marxist dialectical method arose: Its base, great scientific advances: an end to narrow classification: three great discoveries of 19th century; Marxist dialectical method as the most advanced, exact method of thinking.

in accord with reality; overcomes metaphysics which is contrary to reality and can only lead to idealism; sees nature, history, society, as they are, without any reservations.

The first two laws of dialectics: Dialectical change and reciprocal action (note, treated in different order by Stalin and Politzer); as opposed to the characteristics of metaphysics; principle of identity, isolation of things, and eternal and insurmountable divisions. The primary law of dialectics: the observation of motion and change as opposed to the primary law of metaphysics: immobility and identity.

Discuss examples from nature ("Nature is the test of dialectics") and from society, past and present (our purpose is "to change the world"). Discuss examples in the texts. Discuss other examples (e.g., feudal and capitalist

society), particularly Australian examples, from the history of the labor movement; the reformist and revolutionary trends; the position to-day, in Australia, in the labor movement, in the unions, on your job, in your union, in each worker (e.g., a catholic worker, an A.L.P. worker); in the Party, in your branch, in yourself. The unity of theory and practice; the unity (one-ness) of economic, political and ideological struggle, comprising in totality the class struggle.

Always, overall, the battle for peace, against capitalism.

The importance of the test of practice.

Discuss all the time, the self movement (autodynamism) in all phenomena; why we must be able to see this, and build on the new, that which is arising and developing—why we must always look forward.

Lesson 4

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM (2)

(The direct opposite of metaphysics.)

Material Politzer: Part IV., Chapters 4-5 on remaining two laws of dialectics and conclusions.

Part III., pp. 107-117, on remaining one characteristic of metaphysics and conclusions.

Stalin: CPSU, 107-111, on remaining two laws of dialectics and conclusions.

Zhdanov, pp. 31-33, on new dialectical law.

(Note: Again, Stalin and Politzer deal with these two laws in different order.)

GUIDE.

Discuss the two further laws of dialectics; contradiction, and the transformation of quantity into quality. (Note: Again treated in different order by Stalin and Politzer) as opposed to the characteristics of metaphysics, particularly the characteristic—opposition of contraries.

Contradiction as the great law of dialectics. Contradictions inherent in all things and phenomena of nature (see Lenin, p. 109, CPSU); search for the main contradictions; the unity of these opposites within all things and phenomena; their struggle constituting the motive force for self-movement (autodynamism), for development; how things change themselves into their opposites.

Discuss further, in the light of these two laws, examples from last lesson, from the texts, and new examples from life.

Show how "everything depends on the conditions, time and place" (Stalin); how there are no immutable social systems; that the class struggle (struggle of opposite) of the proletariat is a quite natural and inevitable phenomenon and should not be checked, but carried to its conclusion; that it is revolutionary struggle that conforms to reality (transformation by leaps).

The development of the mighty army of peace fighters based on the working class as the new, rising force—the motive force for social development to-day. The atom bomb petition as the key to peace struggle.

Discuss the new dialectical law of criticism and self-criticism as a motive force for development (as raised by Zhdanov). How can we use this law in our Party?

Lesson 5

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM (1)

(The driving force in history—historical change.)

"In studying history, our principle aim is to secure a better understanding of the present, with a view to making history in the future. In other words, we are looking forward, not backward." (J. D. Blake, Communist Review, February, 1949.)

Material: Stalin: On Historical Materialism, CPSU, pp. 118-131.

Politzer: Historical Materialism, Part IV., pp. 171-174. Part V., pp. 179-196.

Blake: Revise Communist Review, May, 1950.

GUIDE.

What determines history?; what is primary, ideas, consciousness, or social existence, the conditions of material life of society?

What is the chief driving force in history and historical change?; what rôle do geographical environment and population play in early society, and to-day?

What constitutes the mode of production; what constitute productive forces and production relations; their unity and contradiction in the mode of production.

The main features of production; change and development; where do changes and development first begin?; the rise of the new productive forces within the old society, spontaneously, unconsciously, independent of the will of men.

The history of the development of society as the history of the development of production, the history of the labouring masses. The clue to the study of the laws of history of society in the economic life of society.

The five main types of society known to history; show the dialectical laws operating; interconnection and interdependence; self-movement and change; contradiction, the struggle of opposites; quantitative changes passing to qualitative changes.

(Partly repeating from last lesson.)

Show how there are no immutable social systems. Discuss the first and second divisions of labour, the origin of classes and class struggle; how to-day the class struggle of the proletariat is a quite natural and inevitable phenomenon,

(Note re P. 192 Politzer) : Bottom paragraph, second line, should read ... "transformed the production relations."

Additional reading where possible:—

Blake: "Marxism-Leninism and Australian History," Communist Review, October, 1945.

Engels: Origin of the Family, Chapters 1 and 9.

Lesson 6

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM (2)

(Origin of ideas and the true power of ideas.)

Material: Stalin: On origin and role of ideas. Repeat CPSU, pp. 114-117; 130-131.

Politzer: Repeat pp. 171-174, 179-186, plus Part VI. in full.

Zhdanov: Pp. 31-36.

Additional reading where possible:—

Blake: "History of Australian Labor Movement," Communist Review, February, 1949.

Zhdanov: On literature criticism, Communist Review, February, 1947.

Konstantinov: "Role of Socialist Consciousness in the Development of Soviet Society."

Henry: 25 Years of A.C.P.—Congress, 1945.

GUIDE.

What is the origin of ideas?; what is primary, ideas, consciousness, or social existence, the conditions of material life of society.

Discuss some of the main ideas prevailing in different stages of history; and work out why these ideas prevailed.

How was Marxist dialectical materialism a "revolution in philosophy" (repeat from Lesson 1).

Discuss the characteristics and traditions of our working class; and why they developed as they did; their significance to us to-day.

Do we deny the power of ideas, the role of men in making history? Discuss the significance, the role, the power of ideas; of true and false ideas, of old and new ideas, in hampering and facilitating progress.

How old ideas linger on in new conditions; within our Party to-day, the struggle against economism, reformist and other bourgeois ideas and practice; the struggle for new, revolutionary ideas and methods of work.

Show the basic clash in ideas to-day; what we mean by partisanship in ideological matters, as opposed to the bourgeois demands for "independence" of the cultural

worker, "art for art's sake." Why is this partisanship essential to successful Communist work?

Discuss Socialist realist culture as the most advanced culture yet created by man; based on a critical re-working of the cultural heritage of the past; enriched with new ideas, new outlook, new vision; castigating all that is decadent and reactionary; correctly reflecting reality, and always pushing forward, giving a glimpse of to-morrow, helping to carry people forward; intimately bound with the general proletarian movement for emancipation and the construction of Communism. Discuss our Party's responsibility to build such a culture, in battle against the depraved ideology of the bourgeoisie; our tasks to-day in this battle.

Discuss the fascist ideology of death and destruction as based on a society rotten to the core, decaying, crumbling, dying.

Discuss the tremendous responsibility we Communists hold to mankind, as the bearers of new advanced ideas.

Discuss the role of socialist consciousness in the development of socialist society.

Some suggestions for further reading on Dialectical and Historical Materialism (most titles available in Australia).

Engels: "Socialism Utopian and Scientific," "Ludwig Feuerbach," "Anti-Duhring," "Part Played by Labor in Transformation from Ape to Man," "Dialectics of Nature"; Marx and Engels: "Communist Manifesto," "Literature and Art," "Capital"; Lenin: "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism"; Engels: "Origin of Family, Private Property and the State" (N.B. Chapters 1 and 9); Kautsky: "Slave Society in Imperial Rome"; Plekhanov: "Materialist Conception of History," "Role of the Individual in History." Hessen: "Social and Economic Roots of Newton's Principia"; Morton: "People's History of England"; Readings from Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Selected Works of Lenin; Bourke: Triumph of Materialism, C.R., April, 1950; Stalin: About Marxism in Linguistics, C.R., August, 1950; Lyatin: From Socialism to Communism, C.R., December, 1947, January, 1948.