

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *Challenging the status quo*

Every day we come across many points of view and arguments which maintain that the technological revolution and globalisation somehow "prove" that capitalism is here to stay and that challenging it is a waste of time.

Technology is used to strengthen the idea that capitalism has a long-term, sustainable future which has created new types of Internet-based economic activity. It appears to produce continuous expansion, allowing groups of people to become super-rich.

There is no future, we are told, in putting forward alternatives to the existing structures, however unequal, unjust and destructive they are. We are told that social history has come to an end with the capitalist form of society.

Professor Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics and a leading supporter of New Labour, says: "At the moment, there is no single body of co-ordinated and persuasive economic or political thought which sees an alternative to capitalism."

Even anti-capitalist protesters limit themselves to temporarily “reclaiming” small areas of space within the system.

Yet the reality is the opposite to what we are told. In the metropolitan countries, the vast majority suffer from intense exploitation at work, low wages, frequent periods of unemployment, a decline in public services and an absolute increase in poverty.

In the developing world, the prospects are usually hunger, endless civil wars and an early death. Global capitalism has brought Earth to the point where its abuse of the environment threatens the future of the planet. An economic and financial catastrophe looms which will affect the whole human race.

#### *the need for method*

To explain this process we need a method of thinking which cuts through the lies, half-truths and deceptions peddled by capitalist governments like New Labour and their supporters in the universities and media.

In the social sciences and academic philosophy, theories dominate which insist that all truth is relative to the individual's viewpoint and perceptions. In other words, we can never get to know anything because what is truth for one person is not the case for the next individual.

Great 20th century discoveries in physics are used to “prove” that the world is beyond understanding. Einstein's theory of relativity and Heisenberg's concept of uncertainty are cited to show that everything is a mystery.

The truth is, of course, that the results of scientific investigation actually run counter to the theories of capitalist philosophy. Through the Hubble telescope, for example, astrophysics is discovering more and more about the universe, and revealing how it is in constant movement and change. In other words, the world is knowable and is the source of endless discoveries.

The advance of knowledge has led to a widening gap between the potential to improve human animal and plant life on the planet, the protection of the planet itself - and the reality, which is that multi-national corporations exploit everything in the blind search for profit.

Research into micro-biology and genetics has led to greater control over aspects of nature and human development, including the discovery of human DNA and artificial techniques of reproduction. The probing of space by a variety of sophisticated instruments has vastly expanded knowledge about the universe.

The liberating potential of

technology is plain for all to see, but it is distorted by the misuse of scientific breakthroughs simply to increase the profits of global corporations at the expense of humanity and the planet at large. Drug companies have the solution to many illnesses, yet people are dying on NHS waiting lists because the service is starved of funds and pays huge amounts to the pharmaceutical giants.

The DNA map makes it possible to pinpoint and cure diseases but private companies patent genes for profit, making control over the human organism and its evolution into a commercial consideration.

Capitalism is incapable of allowing the mass of humanity to share in the benefits of these discoveries. As the contradictions between what is happening around us and people's thinking grow sharper, they reach explosion point. People can no longer live in the old ways and are then prepared to take bold, historical actions.

The need to know when boiling point is reached, and how to develop policies which meet people's aspirations, is the purpose of this pamphlet. MSF members and supporters actually have to have advance warning so that we do not get overwhelmed or taken by surprise by rapid change.

A new consciousness has emerged in the last decade, based on an awareness in every country that a handful of global companies control the outcomes of billions of lives. This understanding, spurred on by the Internet and the mass use of personal computers, raises the level of understanding of global problems. The use of mobile telephones, personal computers, access to the Internet and a myriad of chip-based technologies are a normal part of life for large numbers of people.

#### *global awareness*

More than ever before large numbers of people can find masses of information and select those parts which they find useful. Everyone who makes use of information technology knows that screening, selection and processing are a top priority. This creates a need for a method which can be the key to real knowledge.

Although the emerging change in consciousness is important, by itself it cannot lead to an understanding and a plan for overthrowing capitalism. Control of economic progress falls to a handful of companies driven by profit and competition. The results are unplanned and destructive. What we need is an outlook which asserts clearly that human beings can both understand the world and change it.



## 2. THE METHOD

### *Understanding the changing world*

No social revolution in history has taken place without a body of ideas which have given people an alternative viewpoint to the ruling ideology. The English Revolutionaries of 1640, for example, made their own interpretation of Biblical texts to give them inspiration to challenge and defeat the feudal order.

In France, the revolution of 1789 rejected religion and mysticism in favour of rationalism and science to justify the overthrow of absolute monarchy. In Russia, in 1917, the workers' party led by Lenin based itself on the theory of class struggle to topple capitalism.

The basis of the alternative outlook the MSF is developing is the theory of movement and change which was first put forward around 2,500 years ago by philosophers in ancient India, China and Greece. They began to set out a dynamic view of the world which saw it in constant transformation through the conflict of opposing forces. In ancient Greece debates led by thinkers such as Zeno and Socrates became known as dialectics.

The dialectic was rescued from the obscurity of the ancients by the German classical idealist philosophers, Kant, Schelling and Hegel. It was G.F. Hegel, who in the early 19th century taught that all things, including human thought, change through the movement of opposing forces within themselves. Hegel created a system of ideas based on "the spirit" as the source of movement, but at the same time, made dialectics into a powerful logical tool.

Marx and Engels turned Hegel's dialectic on its head, rejecting the "spirit" in favour of material social forces as the driving force for change. They showed that all class-based social systems arise and fall historically as a result of a conflict between the forces of economic production and their control by a minority ruling class. They revealed how the ideas and philosophy of a given society are dominated by those of the ruling class.

## **Dialectics of ....**

### *nature...*

In the 20th century, as Stephen Hawking wrote: "The old idea of an essentially unchanging universe...was replaced by the notion of a dynamic, expanding universe that seemed to have begun a finite time ago and that might end in a finite time in the future."

### *.....society*

In the history of human society, the key dynamic of change is through the emergence and conflict of social classes. This can be seen, for example, in the transition from pre-feudal society to the rigid class hierarchy of the middle ages, and the taking of power by the capitalist bourgeois classes from the 17th century onwards.

### *.....and thought*

In the development of ideas and thought, the transition from the infinite development of the universal movement of matter beyond thought into the finite individual human being is the source of movement and development.

This alternative outlook - which later became known as materialist dialectics - helps us to understand the role of the masses in historical processes and how to involve them in carrying out social change. Without this outlook, even the best intentioned people fall prey to the prevailing images churned out by the capitalist system.

The world outside of us exists independently of us and our thinking about it, and connects with us through our five senses. Sensation, therefore, is

the first moment in the path of knowledge, in learning about the world outside of us. Our objective world consists of nature, society and thought, which are all forms of law-governed matter in motion.

The continuous movement and change of the world outside of us, which extends into our internal physical and mental world, is revealed through time. Night becomes day through the movement of planets and we grow older. *continued on page 8*

# The path of knowledge

*External world in self movement  
and change (e.g. global capitalism); objective reality;  
universal; whole; infinite; contradictory;  
source of sensation*

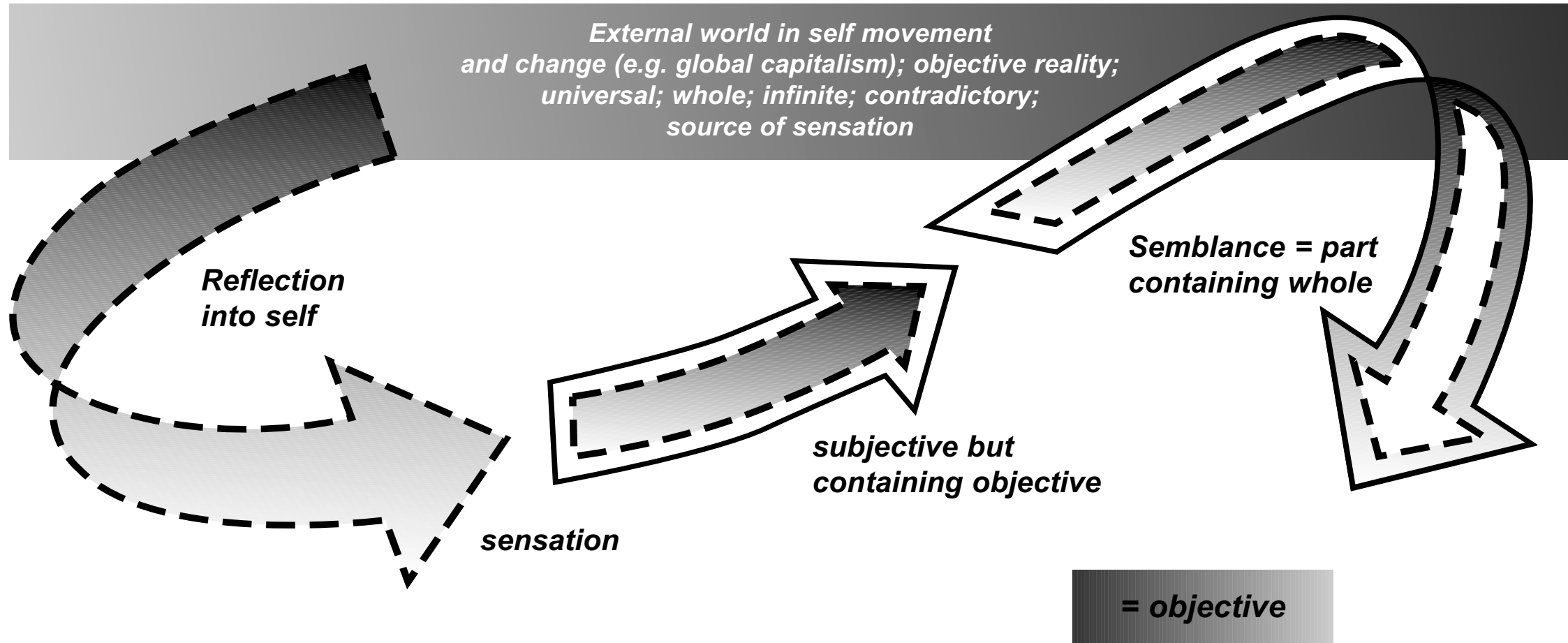
*Reflection  
into self*

*sensation*

*subjective but  
containing objective*

*Semblance = part  
containing whole*

*= objective*



continued from page 5  
THE METHOD.....

Changes within nature, society and thought are continuous, but at the same time are uneven, subject to irregularities, divisions, blockages, moments of quiescence and dramatic leaps as contradictions reach explosive point. Human thought, by its very nature, reflects the changes outside of itself.

As the world around us moves, it gives off energy which is reflected into human beings. We receive impulses or "messages" through sensations which are the direct connection between us and the world outside. These sensations go through further development and images are formed.

#### *contradiction*

The initial sensation actually contains the impulse for further development within itself. This is because this first moment of acquiring knowledge is itself a mass of contradictions which have to be resolved. The sensation is a "part" which contains the content (essence) of the thing ("whole") which gave rise to the sensation in the first place.

This contradiction resolves itself by the sensation received from something out there bouncing back from us to where it came from - the external

world - only to re-enter our thought process in a more developed form. This aspect of dialectical thinking is known as negation.

We now have a semblance or an image of what produced the sensation in the first place. This also contains both an immediacy and essence and is the basis for further study.

An example of this process can be found in any given moment of our daily lives. In the first brief seconds when a new thing comes into our line of vision, such as a bird flying outside, we have a sensation of a small black speck in the sky.

*We don't yet know what the object is, only that there is something moving in space.* Through a series of further movements, the thing begins to show itself as something definite and recognisable.

*So it is the movement of the thing or object itself which causes our knowledge to develop.* To make certain that we identify it correctly, it is important that we do not rush to impose our own subjective view on the thing. This is because the thing we are learning about has its own independent life. It is a mistake, therefore, to jump to conclusions based on past experiences, because if you do that, you will lose sight of what is new.

A dialectical outlook does not,

therefore, reject the images produced by the movement of the world in which we live. Instead, it reveals the source of these images in the world of capitalism, and the contradictions within that source.

For example, the frenzy of advertising - the image "overload" - can be shown to indicate a desperate need to find new markets under conditions of overproduction and deepening slump.

#### *whole in the part*

Here we have an essential feature of dialectics - *the whole within the part and vice versa*. We establish in thought the essential interconnection between the "whole" of the global capitalist system and the "part" of the images which we receive through sensation.

An example of the relation between the whole and the part is the global capitalist system. It is a "whole" which contains "parts" like the European Union trading bloc, the United States as the major economy, financial markets, the environmental crisis and so on. The whole and the parts are in constant motion and change and in a contradictory relationship with each other.

Our understanding is deepened by allowing the *contradiction between the image and its source* to enrich our thinking rather than equating one with

the other. This is not a subjective act based on self-selection but a representation in thinking of the objective movement of things as they proceed from outer (the world) to inner (our thinking).

#### *discover the essence*

This approach accepts that any image is only a reflection in an indirect way of a phenomenon which, if you like, is obscured from immediate view and understanding. We have to go deeper, just as a physicist studies the images of colliding particles to discover their inner essence. As the world is in movement, so there are endless numbers of new truths to establish.

The projection on pages six and seven shows how the objective movement of the world, existing independently of us, is reflected into thought.



### 3. CONCLUSION

## *From theory into practice*

The materialist dialectical method enables us to develop theories of change based on an objective assessment of where we are in history. It shows us that below the surface of apparent non-movement, inner convulsions are breaking up the system. Behind New Labour's huge majority, for example, is a regime in transition to its own disintegration.

The method of spin-doctoring which relies on "perceptions" as a basis for deciding policies is rapidly hitting the buffers. The use of opinion polls, focus groups and a myriad of consultants to find "popular" policies can please key groups of voters for brief periods of time.

But it fails to probe the underlying reality of economic and social processes which are not the result of "perceptions" . Announcing the abolition of classes, as Blair has done, cannot alter the facts of life for the vast majority who work for an employer to earn their wages. The class system exists in the reality of everyday life.

Theories prepare us for practice. For, as we have seen, the outlook of the capitalist system which predominates makes it exceptionally difficult for people to arrive at a deep and comprehensive overview of what is happening and what to do about it.

The system essentially relies on a variety of images to dominate consciousness. These function by obliterating the source of the images themselves - the handful of global corporations, which are owned, controlled and run for the purpose of maximising profit. Behind this process is the message that our thoughts originate solely from within the brains of individuals. This means that the origin of the images that surround us is easily ignored. From there, it is a short step to building up thoughts which have a slender connection to reality.

With the widening of access to the Internet, cyber-technology, personal computers, the opportunities for living in an artificial world of self-created images are endless.

Young people are encouraged to retreat to a personal world of their own "reality" based on opinion, intuition and feelings, with the help of cyberware and a variety of chemical substances. Clearly this aspect of the new technology helps keep the status quo untouched. As one advert puts it: "Reality sucks. Create your own world. Get into Cybertoy.."

What all this amounts to is the philosophy of capitalism itself. It is centred on the individual, on images, a disregard for history and a society whose structures are fixed for all time.

There is, however, at present a contradiction between the ideas people have in their minds (social consciousness) and the reality of a rapidly changing, unstable world "out there" (social being). In other words, there is a gulf between reality and thought, which will sooner or later produce an explosive leap in what people think and do.

Established political structures are being rejected by vast numbers of people, in Britain and elsewhere. Parliamentary politics seems to have little connection with people's lives or problems. The mass of the people are alienated from political processes. Dogmas of various kinds cannot hold people's allegiance. At the same time, economic and ecological processes are building up explosively.

The Movement for a Socialist Future has the job of bringing this analysis together and using this knowledge to build the organisation as a vehicle for revolutionary change.

The movement from the world outside thought to the formation of images into the human brain is a natural process. Human beings operate instinctively with a materialist outlook in order to function in the world. For example, when crossing the street people look around for cars. When we are hungry, we naturally think about food. When driving a car, we are obliged to conform in an objective way with the laws of physics.

This kind of understanding is essential for day-to-day survival. But to develop an outlook which is independent of the approach to thinking handed down by capitalism in countless ways, is something we can only establish in a conscious way in a day-to-day struggle with existing methods of thinking.

If our practices are based on a constantly-updated analysis, we will find a response from the millions of people who want change but see no way of achieving it. At the same time, MSF members will find it easier to understand the twists and turns of the political struggle, as well as the moods and views of those they are trying to convince.

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## Who's who

Einstein, Albert (1879-1955) The founder of modern physics who showed the connection between mass and energy. His General Theory of Relativity was published in 1916.

[www.aip.org/history/einstein](http://www.aip.org/history/einstein)  
(American Institute of Physics site)

Engels, Frederick (1820-1895) Founder of scientific socialism with Karl Marx. Wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, *Anti-Duhring*, *Dialectics of Nature*.

[www.csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org](http://www.csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org)

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770-1831) Outstanding German philosopher. Provided an exhaustive analysis of dialectics in his *Science of Logic*

Heisenberg, Werner (1901-1976) Founder of quantum mechanics, the new physics of the atomic world. "The more precisely the position is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known".

[www.aip.org/history/Heisenberg](http://www.aip.org/history/Heisenberg)

Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804) Founder of German classical philosophy. His theory of knowledge stresses the unknowability of things.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1870 -1924) Leader of the 1917 October Socialist Revolution in Russia. Founder of the Soviet Union. Developed key theories of imperialism, state and revolution and the revolutionary party

Marx, Karl (1818-1883) German revolutionary thinker and leader. Author of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*. Founder, with Engels, of the First Working Men's International.

[www.csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org](http://www.csf.colorado.edu/mirrors/marxists.org)

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm (1775-1854). German classical philosopher who later became a religious mystic and the ideologist of the Prussian monarchy

Socrates (c.469-399 BC) Idealist philosopher of ancient Greece

Zeno (5th century BC) Ancient Greek philosopher of the Eleatic school considered to be the founder of objective dialectics: for Zeno, movement comes from the nature of the thing itself

alternative perspectives from the



This is the first of a series of perspectives produced by the Movement for a Socialist Future.



Also in the series are alternative perspectives on:

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# 1 An alternative outlook

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