Chapter - 1

ON METHOD

This chapter is not just meant as an introduction to the thesis. In the beginning, we have given an introductory note to the study. Then, what importance does this chapter have? This chapter is not just to state the method followed in our study. More than this, method is given the importance of a chapter because of the status of dialectics as methodology itself.

The main and middle part of this chapter is devoted to establish that dialectics is not just ontological, logical and epistemological, but also methodological. Lenin's understanding of the unity/coincidence of logic, epistemology, and ontology as methodology is substantially used here. The initial part of the chapter is devoted to ponder on the philosophical problem of method in general. Here, we would not take up for criticism each and every known methods like the phenomenological or the mathematical. The last and minor part of this chapter forms the statement of the method followed in the present study.
1.1 The Philosophical Problem of Method

It can be rightly said that a correct methodology is a must for correct conclusions. But, how is a correct methodology evolved? Does this itself need another correct one. It is not right to pose such a question this way to yield an infinite regress. Now, how one can come out of this riddle. The only way out is to relate or connect the methodology and the conclusion. In fact, the relation or connection is already there. The point left to us is to see and accept this existing relation. So, method and knowledge are essentially connected. That is, methodology and the various basic fields of knowledge are intertwined. For instance, methodology is related to ontology. Or ontology or methodology or both is again related to epistemology, or this together or these individually again to logic. Lenin stressed the unity of all these aspects. In fact, methodology forms the unity of all these sciences. Whenever this truth is not followed, very one-sided philosophies have resulted.

For instance, let us take the two main methodological approaches - the ontological and the epistemological. The ontological method speculates a comprehensive system of reality.

The epistemological method first analyses the reliability of mental faculties and then forms an understanding of the world. The pure ontological approach resulted in presenting more or less a static, stagnant, dead world view. Plato is a classical example of this class. The pure epistemological approach ends in agnostic, subjective idealist, nihilist or skeptic positions denying the possibility of knowledge of the external world or even denying its very existence. Hume, and to a certain extent Kant followed such a method. Both these approaches gave rise to various distorted views of reality. At the same time, they raised pertinent questions of lasting importance. And all these questions of epistemological and ontological importance were interrelated. With the emergence of dialectical materialism, these questions were begun to be seen in their necessary connection. We will see this a little later.

Only through epistemology, the ontology can be attained; and epistemology presupposes ontology. That is, through subject we know object; but that the subject receives stimuli from external world indicates the existence of the object prior which widely includes also the subject. The hair-splitting separation of subject and object or of the theory of knowledge and the theory of reality, and then attempting to arrive at world views resulted in distorted pictures of the world. Such is the interlinkage of the ontology and epistemology.
More or less the same epistemological-ontological riddle - that one cannot arrive at a theory of reality without a theory of knowledge, and that the moment we formulate a theory of knowledge we assume a theory of reality which we are not supposed to do - is being discussed by some as a vicious question of "gnoseo-ontological circle".²

Karsten Harries highlights this problem while discussing on one Katharina Kanthack's critique on Nicolai Hartmann. Despite weaknesses in other aspects of his philosophy, Hartmann is correct in stressing the interdependency of ontology and epistemology. His view, as the article presents, is:

Our access to being is governed by the structure of our knowledge. In this sense ontology is dependent on an epistemology. Every ontology must, either explicitly or implicitly, presuppose an epistemology which provides the criteria justifying it. But such an investigation into the nature of knowledge, if it is to have a foundation, must assign a place in the realm of being to knowledge. Epistemology remains obscure until it turns to ontology. In this sense ontology must precede epistemology.³

This interdependence is said to constitute the "gnoseo-ontological circle".⁴ These exponents of gnoseo-ontological circle,

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3. Ibid. p. 578.

4. Ibid. p. 579.
on the one hand, rightly accept the strong link between epistemology and ontology, and on the other, posits this very problem as if it would be better to transcend this 'circle'.

Now let us see to what extent the problem we posed in the beginning remains a problem as such. On closer scrutiny, one can see that the demarcation drawn between the two disciplines is an unreal and imposed one. The problem is essentially a created one, not a real one. This does not mean that it is 'error' like. But an ideology of formal logic, the details of which we will see in the next chapter, works behind this.

This problem of method got exposed with the arrival of dialectical materialism, especially, when Engels enunciated what he called "the great basic question of all philosophy" in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. This is the question concerning "the relation of thinking and being". With Hegel's dialectics, this question got the answer in 'identity of thinking and being'. With materialist dialectics, this question got the answer that first, being is [5. Marx, Engels, Lenin, *On Dialectical Materialism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977. p. 163.

6. Ibid.]
prime, and secondly, thinking is capable of cognition of being. Let us conclude that a dialectical unity of these specific disciplines is the only answer to the question of method.

1.2 Dialectics as Methodology

It seems to us that the basis of a correct method is to see things in their interrelation. Right method is not to divide things, but to see them in their unity. To see things or phenomenon in their unity, interconnection and in their context and historical development is the essence of dialectical method. Contrary to dialectical method is the metaphysical approach that sees everything after splitting and separating them, and after taking them out of context. In our view the riddle or the problem that we encountered in the beginning of this chapter was basically a metaphysical one. There, the inseparable ontology and epistemology are forcefully separated.

If the above view is correct, then it is the metaphysical approach of Kant that led him to a dualism between the

7. The term metaphysics was in use synonymous to philosophy. But, with the advent of dialectics, it acquired a meaning counter to dialectic.
subjective faculty of man and the objective reality. Lenin rightly remarked: "In Kant, cognition demarcates (divides) nature and man; actually it unites them." What Lenin meant is that cognition should have united instead of separating the subjective faculty from the objective world. In fact all the dichotomies, divisions and oppositions in Kant are due to this metaphysical approach of him.

Hegel's philosophy marked a definite stage, being an attempt to overcome the separation of laws and forms of thought from those of the objective world. The subjective got identified with the objective in Hegel. Hegel introduced content or objectivity into the logic which was considered until then only a subjectivity. And precisely because of this Hegel was accused of panlogism from quarters of metaphysics.

Though Hegel's method was essentially dialectical, it could not be fully free of the metaphysical traits due to its idealist nature. The difference from Kant is that Hegel's mind is identified with the world. For Hegel, since everything is based on thought, laws of thought are simultaneously laws of objective reality also; logic is identified with ontology. But, Hegel's standing on his head, where thought is

the source of everything is to be further demetaphysicised.
If the development of thought is taken as a reflection of
objective dialectics, i.e., if the laws of thought are taken
as the reflections of the laws of nature and society, then
the demerit of Hegel in absolutising the thought can be
overcome. Hegel should be forced to stand on his head. Mate-
rialist dialectics does this job as detailed in the next
chapter.

We, in the course of our thesis, will try to show that
the correct methodology is the dialectical one, and material-
ist dialectics is the most dialectical and the least mataphy-
sical. The question of what dialectics is would be dealt
in detail in the next chapter. But now itself, we have to
point out that dialectics is all-permeating: logic is diale-
cctic, epistemology is dialectic, history is dialectic, entolo-
gy is dialectic, and methodology is also dialectic. And that
the unity of all these is methodology. Lenin has rightly sug-
gested the unity of "logic, dialectics and theory of knowled-
ge of materialism (there is no need of three words: they are
all one and the same)." 9 (Here, Lenin uses dialectics in

9. V.I.Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.38, Progress Publishers,
Moscow, 1981, p. 317.)
the sense of ontology, i.e., the laws of objective world -
nature and society). Such a concept of unity was first given
to us by Hegel. Lenin develops this.\textsuperscript{10} This unity does not
stop materialist dialectics from demarcating man from objective
reality, subject from object; but the point is that it
does not absolutely separate them and end up in metaphysics.
While discussing Lenin's remarks on the Hegelian concept of
the coincidence of dialectics, logic and epistemology, Oizerman
also substantiates the same. He says that "the coincidence of
dialectics, logic and epistemology is not an abstract identity
devoid of differences."\textsuperscript{11} The suggestion that these should be
converted into a single discipline is the methodology hinted at
by Lenin.

Another important question related to methodology is the
fact that reality is developing; consequently, the knowledge
about it and the knowledge process are all developing. And
when the methodology itself is the unity of all these, then
methodology also cannot be a fixed one. Thus, methodology is
always the unity of all these, provided we are not taking
unity in a simplistic way.


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 254.
Lenin holds that knowledge is an eternal process. In *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*, Lenin rightly asserts: "... we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how knowledge emerges from ignorance, how incomplete, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact." This dialectical view of human knowledge implies that methodology also can be enriched, and it cannot be a rigid one. A fixed methodology cannot allow advances in itself. In our view, the very dialectics would not have resulted if the same old methodology was stuck to by Hegel. So, methodology does and should always have an open end while it has also boundaries. Otherwise methodology cannot be dialectical.

The very writing, in advance, on the method to be followed can become metaphysical if it is not understood in its right sense and proportion. In the beginning of the chapter, we more or less arrived at the view that the very separating of the method from the content is metaphysical. At the same time, in our view, they are not of an abstract unity devoid of any difference. To this extent, method should be stated.

So, a dialectical method would not work as a limiting factor; on the other, it would take us, in our research exploration, to the unknown, so-far-not discovered areas.

1.3 Method followed in the Present Thesis

Thus, we have attempted to show in the previous section, that method and content go together; method is no way prior to content; especially dialectical understanding of method cannot be otherwise. Kant also, towards the end of *Critique of Pure Reason*, hints at the comprehensive and the developmental nature of method. Let us quote a revealing part from the *Architectonic*:

... Only after we have spent much time in the collection of materials in somewhat random fashion, at the suggestion of an idea lying hidden in our mind, and after we have, indeed, over a long period, assembled the materials in a merely technical manner, does it first become possible for us to discern the idea in a clearer light and to devise a whole architectonically, in accordance with the ends of reason.  

Thus, the method also depends on the content of the thesis. The characterisation that "concrete analysis of the concrete conditions", a definition of dialectics advocated by Lenin, can

be very apt here. Even this statement does not make things very clear. But, here what we can state is only our intentions in general.

To be more specific, we shall state that the dialectics in Kant and Hegel would be critically examined from the perspective of materialist dialectics since the latter forms in our view, the latest development in dialectics.

Conclusion

We have attempted to show that the problem of method finds a valid solution in dialectics. In our view, the main contrast of dialectical method with the metaphysical one lies in the fact that the former sees the various aspects of reality in their unity and historical development. Lenin rightly advocated this method; the roots of this method are derived from Hegel. In the present thesis we follow the dialectical method, the perspective of materialist dialectics.