Chapter III

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ONTOLOGY OF
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At the outset itself, we would like to mention two of our presuppositions regarding Marx and Engels as having developed a common philosophy. It is very important to make our intentions clear here especially when de-hyphenation attempts to separate Engels from Marx and accord an ontology to only Engels are already on. We will expose these claims of a complete departure of Engels from Marx in the last chapters. At present, we would treat them together as having a common materialist ontology. Another is the question of dividing Marx himself as earlier/young and later/mature. We consider Marx with a continuity despite minor questions of emphasis.

Unlike in Spinoza, materialism is very evident in Marxism. In this chapter, we would try to depict the materialist ontology of Marx and Engels in general before going to their ideas on nature and matter, man and consciousness, and the materialist dialectics in particular.

1. **Materialist**

Marx and Engels hold the same views in ontology, but many authors interpret them differently. Some of them like Jordan claim that Marx's ontological positions
is naturalistic while Engels' is a dialectical materialist one. Few other interpreters like Schmidt claim that Marx's materialism cannot be understood ontologically. We would try to show here that Marx and Engels do not have any basic difference, and both have the same view of ontology, i.e., dialectical materialism. We would also analyse Marx's writings and show that he himself used the word materialism in place of naturalism, a usage generally found in his early writings.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895) together developed the philosophy known as Marxism. They have written many books and articles either jointly or after consulting each other. We can directly judge the ontological position of Marxism as a dialectical materialist one on the basis of Engels' writings. But this is taken by many interpreters to point out the difference of Engels with Marx. Lukacs finds "no independent treatment of ontological problems" in Marx.(1) Alfred Schmidt says that "Marx's materialism is not to be understood ontologically".(2) These positions of Lukacs

and Schmidt represent the argument that Marx does not have any ontology as such; even if he does, it should be understood through the social categories. Let us point out the basic fault in this social-reductionism.

The attempt of Lukacs to evade the issue of materialism in Marx is the reason behind his denial of any ontological treatment proper by Marx. Lukacs' basic objection to materialism is the point. The idealist tendencies in his *History and Class Consciousness* prove this fact. Lukacs himself admitted this afterwards in the preface of the 1967 edition of the book where he said that "*History and Class Consciousness* was based on mistaken assumptions." (3)

In this book, Lukacs, as he himself made it clear, is restricting his analysis to the social world. He went to the extent of saying that "man has become the measure of all (societal) things." (4) Lukacs is not wrong as far as the social world is concerned because the

4. Ibid., p. 185.
subject-object dialectics, man's relation with his social objects and their transformation through labour or praxis, comes to the centre-stage of social ontology. But to limit everything in this arena or to make man the starting point in every sense is fully misplaced. In ontology, man's prehistory, a history prior to man that excludes man, also has a place; so also a nature inclusive of human beings and society. Schmidt also follows Lukacs in this. He says:

Nature without man has no sense, no movement. It is chaos, undifferentiated and indifferent matter, hence ultimately nothing. (5)

Such an assumption belongs to pure subjectivism of the classical variety. Nature is not dependent on man to start with. He is wrong when he declares that "material reality is from the beginning socially mediated." (6) This is not only Schmidt's view; he attributes it to Marx.

Both Lukacs and Schmidt do not discard materialism in Marx; but they want to say that this

6. Ibid., p.35.
materialism should be neither taken as ontology nor seen ontologically. This 'social reductionism' might have arisen from two sources - one, from their own philosophical predispositions, and the other from their misreading of Marx as only a humanist possibly because of a narrow reading of Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (EPM). For many, the EPM position is too tempting to lead otherwise. That Leszek Kolakovski characterises Marx's view as "the dominant anthropocentrism" different from "the latent transcendentalmartism of Engels' dialectic of nature" is also perhaps because of a prejudicial reading of EPM.(7)

As David-Hillel Ruben has pointed out in the case of Schmidt, reading more into the Theses on Feuerbach is also a source of error.(8) On Schmidt, and his book, Ruben says:

Schmidt's aim, which is wholly applaudable, is to prevent the materialism which he is

describing from degenerating into a materialism which fails to allow for human beings and the ways in which they can change, transform, the reality in which they live. This was... Marx's central aim in the 'Theses on Feuerbach'. But whatever his intention, Schmidt has done more than that. The book is full of lapses into a form of idealism, in which 'the whole of nature is socially mediated...' and 'nature cannot be separated from man'. Does this mean that if man had never existed, which is certainly conceivable, nature would never have existed either?(9)

This is the crucial question to be answered. Schmidt is trying to subordinate nature under matter as a social category.(10) On the other hand, Marx subordinated man and society to nature; nature is taken broader and prior to man and his consciousness; only after a historical emergence of man and consciousness, the human interaction with nature became possible; nature and/or matter is mind-independent, i.e., independent of human consciousness. By using Marx's writings including his earlier ones, we would

9. Ibid.
try to show that Marx preaches a materialist ontology, not fundamentally different from that of Engels.

1.1 Marx has a materialist ideology

In an afterword in Capital, while criticising Hegel, Marx talks of "the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into form of thought." (11) For Hegel, idea is an independent subject and the real world is only the external from of this idea. Marx thinks the other way. (12) Since material world is taken as the source and base of the 'idea', what Marx tries to establish is undoubtedly materialism vis-a-vis the idealism of Hegel.


12. Ibid. Marx says here: "To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the idea", he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurges of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the idea". With me, on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought".
Again, Marx stresses the same point in his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Marx:

He has made the subject of the idea into a product and predicate of the Idea. He does not develop his thought out of what is objective, but what is objective in accordance with a ready made thought which has its origin in the abstract sphere of logic. (13)

Man and human activity are also taken as part of the nature, objective reality. In EPM of 1844 Marx says: "That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself for man is a part of nature." (14) Pointing out the defect in Feuerbach, Marx says that human activity itself should be taken as objective activity, and reality should be taken not only as object, but as subject also because practice (human sensuous activity) is the active side of the objective reality. This is said in the first of the theses by Marx in 1845 on Feuerbach.


14. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,
The chief defect of all previous materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that things[\textit{Gegenstand}], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was set forth by idealism - but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity.(15)

Marx's emphasis on the same objectivity can be witnessed in many other parts of \textit{EPM} of 1844. For instance,

An objective being acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective

did not reside in the very nature of his being. He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects - because at bottom he is nature. In the act of positing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of "pure activity" into a creating of the object; on the contrary, his objective product only confirms his objective activity, his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being. (16)

In the second section of the first chapter in *Capital* where he deals with commodities, Marx clearly distinguishes matter and nature from man:

The use-values, coat, linen, etc., i.e., the bodies of commodities, are combinations of two elements - matter and labour. If we take away the useful labour expended upon them, a material substratum is always left, which is furnished by Nature without the help of man. The latter can work only as Nature does, that is by changing the form of matter. Nay more, in this work of changing the form he is constantly helped by natural forces. We see, then, that labour is not

the only source of material wealth, of use-values produced by labour. As William Petty puts it, labour is its father and the earth its mother.(17)

In the Introduction (1857) to Grundrisse, while dealing with the method of political-economy, Marx criticises Hegel and presents the materialist understanding in which the world, society or any subject under comprehension should be taken as a pre-condition.

The concrete subject remains outside the intellect and independent of it — that is so long as the intellect adopts a purely speculative, purely theoretical attitude. The subject, society, must always be envisaged therefore as a pre-condition of comprehension even when the theoretical method is employed.(18)


Now, we have seen the passages from various works of Marx which conclusively indicate that he is a materialist. The overall primacy of matter is that which makes one's view materialism. The essential independence of nature and natural products from mind is the point. Nature is independent of consciousness. Aesthetic products and products of man's purposive activity are not essentially independent of consciousness in the sense that they are the products of consciousness, human labour. But nature is ontologically prior to man or human consciousness. In the case of the products of human or social consciousness also, literal independence is not questionable even though an essential independence in the sense of ontology cannot be attributed. As far as nature or matter is concerned, its independence from and priority to human consciousness is the point in favour of materialism and this is what Marx is advocating in the various passages of *Capital, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction* to *Grudrisse* that we have seen so far.
Scott Meikle argues in favour of Marx's consideration that the universal is the real essence of the finite real. As he says, Marx's remedy to Hegel's defect is "to regard the universal as the real essence of the finite real, i.e., of what exists and is determined."(19) In Marx, matter or nature becomes the real universal essence in which nature's products, man, thought, etc. are based or have the starting point. A monist view of materialism, as analysed by Scott Meikle, is rightly attributed to Marx by Ruben also. He explains that Marx is not a Cartesian dualist and that the essential independence, enjoyed by Nature is not given to thought.

Acceptance of the essential independence of nature from the human or of natural things from thought, simply does not imply the acceptance of the converse essential independence of thought or society from nature, or natural things. (20)

1.2 Naturalism is the new materialism in Marx

Marx's clear advocacy of naturalism and humanism in EPM as something that replaces both materialism and idealism has given rise to controversies in characterising the ontology of Marx. The differentiation of Marx from Engels also emerges mainly from Marx's views in EPM. But the fact is that whenever Marx uses the term 'materialism' in EPM, he uses it in the sense of old materialism. Contemplative, speculative, old materialism is different from the new, dialectical and historical materialism. See a controversial passage in EPM of 1844:

... we see how consistent naturalism or humanism is distinct from both idealism and materialism, and constitutes at the same time the unifying

truth of both. We see also how only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history.(21)

The consistent naturalism or humanism of Marx in EPM takes into account the nature and human species as part of the former. The unifying truth includes the active side of materialism, i.e., the thought is explained in terms of the development of nature; it includes as well the corrections done on the limitations of old materialism, i.e., again, the active side of reality is not left to idealism to develop and separate it from the real. The first thesis on Feuerbach that we saw earlier points at the continuity of development of the same views in Marx.

In the first thesis, the defect of "all previous materialism - that of Feuerbach included" is criticised; because, here, reality is taken "only in the form of object, or of contemplation" and not as practice, as human sensuous activity and not as subjectivity. And this mistake, in fact, leads Feuerbach not to conceive "human activity itself as objective activity". (22)

Apart from the first, in the fifth, ninth and
tenth theses, Marx refers to usages like sensuous
contemplation, contemplative materialism, old materialism
etc. In the fifth, Feuerbach is understood to appeal to
"sensuous contemplations" instead of "human sensuous
activity"; in the ninth, "contemplative materialism" is
more or less equated with "materialism which does not
comprehend sensuousness as practical activity"; and in
the tenth, the standpoint of the "old materialism" is
differentiated from that of the new in terms of the nature
of society.(23)

Our point is that Marx's reference to
materialism in EPM is about the old materialism which is
to be discarded as unable to explain the reality in its
development. And, at the same time, we want to clarify
that the attempt to basically separate Marx from Engels on
this ground is baseless. When Z.A. Jordan attributes
naturalism to Marx and dialectical materialism to
Engels(24), it should be admitted that he does not try to
see their views in the totality of ideas and in context.
EPM views are taken and projected without seeing the

23. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
24. Z.A. Jordan, The Evolution of Dialectical
Materialism (London & New York, 1967)
relation of the text with other texts of Marx and of both.

But Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* argue for a materialist perception. Here, Young Hegelians are criticised for attributing independent existence to products of consciousness. Against this and other previous classical philosophies, Marx and Engels together present a clear materialist view. Their premises are "the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity." (26) That is, material conditions already existing in nature and those products of nature mediated by human labour, and the real individual and their activity are all premises. Morality, religion, ideology etc. are all taken as forms of consciousness, the sublites of the material life-process, that "no longer retains the semblance of independence." (27)

25. Marx, Engels, *The German Ideology*, (Moscow: Progess, 1976), pp. 35-36. "Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men..., it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness." (pp.35-36)

26. Ibid., pp.36-37.
27. Ibid., p.42.
1.3 Engels' Views

The common view expressed in *The German Ideology* itself shows that Engels' views on ontology are no different from Marx's. And that Engels' have a materialist ontology is never questioned. In fact the complaint against Engels is that he follows a materialist ontology. So it is not difficult for us to prove our point. The development of science and philosophy is adduced by Engels to prove the "materiality" of the world.(28)

The unity of the world does not consist in its being, although its being is a precondition of its unity, as it must certainly first be before it can be one. Being, indeed, is always an open question beyond the point where our sphere of observation ends. The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved not by a few juggled phrases but by a long and wearisome development of philosophy and natural science.(29)


29. Ibid.
Thus, being, existence, materiality, for Engels, preceeds everything. Man and consciousness are considered products of nature, as Marx does. Engels says that thought and consciousness are "products of human brain and that man himself is a product of nature, which has developed in and along with its environment; hence it is self-evident that the products of human brain, being in the last analysis also products of nature, do not contradict the rest of nature's interconnections but are in correspondence with them."(30)

Like Marx, Engels also considers concepts or ideas as the images of material world of things. In Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, Engels says:

We comprehend the concepts in our heads... materialistically - as images of real things instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of the absolute concept.(31)

On human activity and practice also, Engels has similar views like Marx's. He writes:

30. Ibid., pp.50-51.
Natural science, like philosophy, has hitherto entirely neglected the influence of man's activity on their thought; both know only nature on the one hand and thought on the other. But it is precisely the alteration of nature by man, not solely nature as such, which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought, and it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased. (32)

Thus, Engels considers nature, being, material reality as prime; thoughts and consciousness come from nature and man who is again a product of nature; human practical activity is not left to idealism for its fantasies, but instead taken as the immediate basis of human thought. We tried to show that Marx also has a materialist ontology. The materialism which Marx and Engels uphold does not belong to the old variety. What is it then?

1.4 Dialectical and historical materialism

By now, the differentiation between mechanical materialism and dialectical materialism has become a very familiar issue in philosophy. Before the emergence of

Marxism, materialism remained a conception that regards things as fixed; matter in motion was not conceived by the then materialism. This old materialism came to be termed as vulgar, mechanistic, mechanical, metaphysical, contemplative etc. The materialist explanation advocated by Marx and Engels became the new, militant, dialectical and historical. (33) In this new conception, as Engels has put it in Ludwig Feuerbach..., "the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away." (34) Matter is conceived along with motion and vice versa. The materialists before Marx, even if they talked of motion and matter, could not understand the interconnections. (35) Matter developed dialectically; its 'conscious reflex' became the dialectic of concepts. Thus the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon

33. Marx calls it 'new' materialism in Theses on Feuerbach; Lenin and many Russian texts call it often as 'militant'. Dialectical materialism is the most popular usage.

34. Marx, Engels, Lenin, op. cit., p. 175.

35. Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring (Moscow: Progress, 1977), pp. 77-78.
its head, and this materialist dialectic became the general laws of motion in nature as well as in human mind. (36)

We would see the laws of materialist dialectics in another section. But one thing we shall make clear here, that is, there is no difference in laws of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, because the former is only a dialectical materialist conception of history. Both Engels and Marx together authored The German Ideology which depicts the premises of materialist conception of history, and this fact itself replies to those who consider one as a dialectical materialist and the other as a historical materialist. In nature and mind these laws, though identical in substance, can express with differences, as Engels himself accepted. (37)

Dialectical materialism (including historical) sees things in their interconnections and development, in their interactions and evolution, sees the consciousness and thought also as a human activity, practice, as

37. Ibid. "Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thought."
objectivity, and accepts the reciprocal influence of nature and human thought on each other.

2. Nature, Matter and Motion

The term matter was first used by the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas considered it as pure potentiality, lacking all positive characteristics. As Oizerman points out, "Thomas Aquinas and his successors removed the anti-metaphysical features from Aristotle's metaphysics. Matter, which he had considered uncreatable and indestructable, embracing diverse possibilities for modification, was interpreted by the Scholastics as a pure possibility that was not being and that became such only due to the actualising activity of form. That interpretation of matter was fully compatible with the catholic dogma of the creation of the world from nothing."(38) Later, Locke, systematically discussed the limitations of the term 'substance' and advocated the use of the term 'matter'. About Locke's position, Oizerman:

One must evaluate Locke's critique of the concept 'substance', which he tended to assign to universals... He claimed that the word

'substance' was applied by philosophers to three quite different things: 'to the infinite incomprehensible God, to finite spirits, and to body'. Did that mean that God, the human spirit, and body were only modifications of one and the same substance? No one, evidently, would agree with that... Locke sometimes expressed himself in the sense that philosophy could manage without this term; the concept of body fully covered the positive content contained in the idea of substance. (39)

Later, 'substance' is replaced by God or matter or spirit. Berkeley thought God and matter is opposites, and Hume interpreted the concept of matter as an illusion of something supersensory that does not exist. Kant's reality, the unknowable 'thing in itself', is actually the matter behind the sensations.

In Marxism, the reality becomes knowable. Engels defines matter correctly in Dialectics of Nature:

Matter as such is a pure creation of thought and an abstraction. We leave out of account the

39. Ibid., pp. 171-72.
qualitative differences of things in lumping them together as corporeally existing things under the concept of matter. Hence, matter as such, as distinct from definite existing pieces of matter, is not anything sensuously existing. When natural science directs its efforts to seeking out uniform matter as such, to reducing qualitative differences to merely quantitative differences in combining identical smallest particles, it is doing the same thing as demanding to see fruit as such instead of cherries, pears, apples,...(40)

Here, matter denotes the universal which is a generalisation of all objective things of reality; its existence is only possible through the particulars. It is only an abstraction of whole reality in thought which can not be perceived by man directly. It is assumed only through the things. We saw a similar view of Spinoza when he tries to define Substance (God) epistemologically.

Motion is an inherent quality of matter; it is mode of existence of matter or attribute of matter.

In Anti-Duhring, Engels writes:

Motion is the mode of existence of matter.

Never anywhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be.(41)

In Dialectics of Nature,

Motion in the most general sense, conceived as the mode of existence, the inherent attribute, of matter, comprehends all changes and processes occurring in the universe, from mere change of place right up to thinking.(42)

"Matter without motion is just as inconceivable as motion without matter."

Engels conceives the transfer of motion from the lowest, simplest forms to the higher and more complicated forms which is comparable to Spinoza's mode of motion or rest and its movement from simplicity to complexity, from simple body to complex individual.

Matter and motion are self-caused, and remains same as a sum total in all its changing forms.(44)

41. Frederick Engels, op.cit. (No. 35), p. 77.
42. Frederick Engels, op.cit.(N.40), p. 69.
43. Frederick Engels, op.cit.(N.35), p.78.
44. Frederick Engels, op.cit.(N. 40), pp. 231-32.
in motion, i.e., nature including the species man, is the essence of existence. Matter is most generalised category in Marx and Engels that denotes the whole objective reality; motion is taken as inherent in matter. It is self caused whereas the interaction or interchangeability of motion can be considered as cause and effect relation. Another important aspect concerned with matter is the concept of nature. We find that Engels uses the term nature and matter in the same sense as Spinoza uses Nature, Substance and God, in order to explain different aspects of one and the same reality. We discussed that matter represents the universal essence of the objective reality as it is or as it confronts us. Engels discusses the development of the concept of nature and concludes it according to the understanding of the natural sciences of his time. In his words, "The new outlook on nature was complete in its main features: all rigidity was dissolved, all fixity dissipated, all particularity that had been regarded as eternal became transient, the whole of nature was shown as moving in eternal flux and cyclical course."(45)

Here he succinctly presents the dialectical view on nature achieved by the scientific development of

45. Ibid., p.30.
that time. Later, when he comments on the 'creation' outlook, matter in motion is used in place of the creator of world. Engels says that "either we must have recourse to a creator, or we are forced to the conclusion that the incandescent raw material for the solar systems of our universe was produced in a natural way by transformations of motion which are by nature inherent in moving matter, and the conditions for which, therefore, must also be reproduced by matter, even if only after millions and millions of years and more or less by chance, but with the necessity that is also inherent in chance." (46)

We can say that Engels explains objective reality in two terms: when he discusses world as such, he uses the term 'nature', and when he discusses essence of the whole objective reality he uses the term 'matter'. Matter represents the whole of objective reality. It is also used as contrary to consciousness. The question arises as what consciousness is. Let us see this in the next section.

46. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
3. Man and Consciousness

Spinoza's man is a natural and biological being, while in Marx, he is historical, social, biological and natural being. In Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx:

Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers - he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities - as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs - essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers.(47)

Here, Marx uses the term 'instincts' in the place of 'desire' in Spinoza. Not only this, Marx also differentiates man from animal in a Spinozaist manner. Marx writes:

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. (48)

The interpretations of man by Spinoza and Marx are more or less same when they explain man as a natural and biological being. But Marx does not stop here; he explains man as a social being. He writes:

The individual is the social being. His manifestations of life even if they may not appear in the direct form of communal manifestations of life carried out in association with others - are therefore an expression and confirmation of social life.

48. Ibid., p. 73.
Man's individual and species-life are not different, however much - and this is inevitable - the mode of existence of the individual is a more particular or more general mode of the life of the species, or the life of the species is a more particular or more general individual life.

In his consciousness of species man confirms his real social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought,...(49)

Marx defines man as a social being. The necessary social nature of consciousness is better summed up by human Gupta:

The emergence of consciousness, according to Dialectical Materialism, is directly related to the making of tools. Making of tools requires labour which is collective that is social in character. The making of tools requires transforming nature. The transformation of nature requires a number of interrelated operations by man which can only be performed through the collective and co-operative

49. Ibid., p.99.
endeavour of a number of individuals; consequently, labour is a social phenomenon. Thus, consciousness which is the direct outcome of social labour is bound to be a social phenomenon. (50)

Human beings are not just natural and social, but historical too; so also their consciousness. In Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx points out this:

Neither nature objectively nor nature subjectively is directly given in a form adequate to the human being... And as everything natural has to come into being, man too has his act of origin - history - which, however, is for him a known history, and hence as an act of origin it is a conscious self-transcending act of origin. History is the true natural history of man... (51)


In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels repeat this again:

Consciousness is,... from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is the consciousness of nature, which first confronts men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus purely animal consciousness of nature...(52)

From this animal consciousness, man's "consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him," a beginning of social consciousness, develops. It is a "herd-consciousness" when either consciousness takes the place of instinct or the instinct becomes a conscious one. From this tribal consciousness to division of labour to private property, to emancipation of consciousness into

"pure" theory, theology, morality and philosophy etc., to conflicts in social relations and productive forces to the national consciousness, to state to social alienation and so on, the consciousness develops historically.(53)

Now, let us see the general laws of the development of nature, that of matter into consciousness, and of thought etc. These general laws are those of the materialist dialectics.

4. Materialist Dialectics

We have already found that the nature or matter including the origin of man and human consciousness is in constant motion, change and development. The question of the development of world is also a basic question in philosophy, from ancient times till today. Though, the development of the world is conceived in various ways by the different schools of thought, the two basic conceptions can be delineated - one of metaphysics and the other of dialectics.

53. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
Though both Engels and Marx worked together with common notions, the particular act of formulating the laws of dialectics was from the side of Engels. He writes in *Dialectics of Nature*:

It is... from the history of nature and human society that the laws of dialectics are abstracted. For they are nothing but the most general laws of these two aspects of historical development, as well as of thought itself. And indeed they can be reduced in the main to three:

The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa;

The law of interpenetration of opposites;

The law of the negation of the negation.

All three are developed by Hegel in his idealist fashion as mere laws of thought: ... The mistake lies in the fact that these laws are foisted on nature and history as laws of thought, and not deduced from them. (54)

According to the first law, "qualitative changes can only occur by the quantitative addition or quantitative subtraction of matter or motion (so-called energy)." (55)

According to the second law, opposites are interconnected. Motion itself is an example of this law. In Anti-Duhring, Engels says:

... we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on one another. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions. Motion itself a contradiction... life consists precisely and primarily in this - that a being is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and resolves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life too comes to an end, and death steps in. (56)

55. Ibid., p. 63.
Motion was taken as a contradiction earlier by Zeno as well as Hegel. While Zeno took it as unreal, Hegel accepted it as real. Marx and Engels also took up Hegel's position. Engels formulated the second law of dialectics as that of interconnection, interpenetration of opposites. In *Dialectics of Nature* where he talks of basic forms of motion, Engels gives us enough examples to this effect. Examples of attraction and repulsion are given. Here, he talks of polar opposites in their mutual connections:

Dialectics has proved from the results of our experience of nature so far that all polar opposites in general are determined by the mutual action of the two opposite poles on each other, that the separation and opposition of these poles exist only within their mutual connection and union, and, conversely, that their union exists only in their separation and their mutual connection only in their opposition. (57)

Engels considered the third law as the most important one. After exposing the metaphysics in Herr Duhring's understanding of the law of negation of negation, Engels states:

Negation in dialectics does not mean simply saying no, or declaring that something does not exist, or destroying it in any way one likes. Long ago Spinoza said: Omnis determinatio est negatio — every limitation or determination is at the same time a negation. And further: the third kind of negation is here determined, firstly, by the general and, secondly, by the particular nature of the process. I must not only negate, but also sublate the negation. I must therefore so arrange the first negation that the second remains or becomes possible. How? This depends on the particular nature of each individual case. If I grind a grain of barley, or crush an insect, I have carried out the first part of the action, but have made the second part impossible. Every kind of thing therefore has a peculiar way of being negated in such manner that it gives rise to a development, and it is just the same with every kind of
conception or idea. (58)

These three laws of materialist dialectic work together. They are interconnected and reflect a development of world from old to new. Maurice Cornforth shows their interconnection in developmental process. He says:

Qualitative change comes about when an old unity of opposites, in which one side was dominant, is replaced by a new, in which the relation of dominance is altered. The nature of this change is determined by the nature of the internal contradictions of which it is the outcome, though it may often be occasioned, and is always conditioned, by external causes.

The appearance of new quality is always sudden while the completion of qualitative change, the supplanting of old quality by new, is a gradual process taking a longer or shorter time according to the nature of the forces at work and the circumstances in which they operate. The struggle through which change comes

about takes different forms...

A forward movement of development takes place when the working out of a series of contradictions in a process carries that process forward from one stage to another... Forward development can only proceed by the negation of the old by the new...(59)

More about dialectics we shall see in epistemology, especially when we deal with method and categories.

To sum up, Marx and Engels have a common materialist ontology which is dialectical. Matter is the universal essence of reality. Man is a part of nature. The active side of man is also part of objectivity. The interaction of nature and labour, the practical critical activity, the unity of thinking and being is the immediate basis of thought and knowledge. Human consciousness develops out of a long history of practice. Man is natural, biological, social and historical. Consciousness is basically social. Man alters nature, and nature in turn

man too. History also has materialist premises. Our thoughts are materially bound to reality. The development of matter, nature and man's consciousness and laws of nature and thought, matter and motion are all governed by certain general laws of materialist dialectics.