



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Did Lenin refound Marxist dialectics in 1914?

Citation for published version:

Coombs, N 2016, 'Did Lenin refound Marxist dialectics in 1914?', *European Legacy*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1, pp. 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2015.1085676>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/10848770.2015.1085676](https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2015.1085676)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

European Legacy

Publisher Rights Statement:

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in The European Legacy on [date of publication], available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/10848770.2015.1085676>

©Coombs, N. (2015). Did Lenin Refound Marxist Dialectics in 1914?. The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Did Lenin Refound Marxist Dialectics in 1914?

(revised copy for *The European Legacy*)

Author

Dr. Nathan Coombs

Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow

Room 5.12, Chrystal Macmillan Building

15a George Square

Edinburgh

EH8 9LZ

nathan.coombs@ed.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Lars T. Lih for making insightful comments on an earlier draft of this article and for generously sharing his database of historical research with me. I also wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their helpful suggestions for improvements.

Abstract

Lenin's philosophical legacy has been a source of controversy throughout the twentieth century. Within Marxism, the meaning of Lenin's theory and practice has given rise to a number of competing accounts vying to reclaim his legacy from its ossification under Stalinism. One such account popular today is the Hegelian-Marxist interpretation of Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. According to thinkers such as Raya Dunayevskaya and Kevin Anderson, Lenin's notebooks on Hegel's *Science of Logic* represent a radical break from classical dialectical materialism. For these Hegelian-Marxists, Lenin's acerbic remarks on Engels's and Plekhanov's dialectics reveal him as the forerunner of Georg Lukács and Herbert Marcuse and represent a thoroughgoing reconceptualization of the dialectics of revolution. In this article I submit these arguments to the test of a fine grained textual analysis. I conclude, opposite to the Hegelian-Marxist narrative, that Lenin neither intended to nor accomplished a refoundation of Marxist dialectics in 1914. The rhetorical flourish of quantity-quality leaps Lenin adds to his works from 1914, I argue, show him less as an innovator in Marxist philosophy and more as a keeper of the flame of dialectical materialist orthodoxy.

Did Lenin Refound Marxist Dialectics in 1914?

In a word, not only do oats grow according to Hegel, but the Russian Social-Democrats war among themselves according to Hegel.

V.I. Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904)¹

Leaps! Breaks in Gradualness Leaps! Leaps!

V.I. Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks* (1914)²

Lenin's legacy has proved controversial throughout the twentieth century. For conservatives and liberals, Lenin was responsible for perverting the Social Democrat programme of peaceful Parliamentary reform into a violent vanguardism responsible for the rise of the totalitarian state. For Western Marxists, Leninism's ossification at the hands of Stalin compelled a retrieval of Lenin's authentic political thought before the erection of a staid personality cult around his figure. This reinterpretative effort has frequently taken inspiration from Georg Lukács's representation of Lenin as the thinker of praxis par excellence.³ Today, however, one of the most arresting and popular narratives concerns Lenin's philosophical contribution to Marxism. This focuses on his study of Hegel's *Science of Logic* in late 1914 and its role in shaping his political thought for the rest of his life.⁴ Hegelian-Marxists credit Lenin's heightened sensitivity to 'self-movement' and for the 'unity of opposites' after reading Hegel for his innovative analyses of imperialism, his policy of revolutionary defeatism, and for his faith in economically-backward Soviet Russia being able to take the lead in the Marxist revolutionary movement.

At the core of this alleged breakthrough is Lenin's supposedly newfound appreciation of the possibility of great historical leaps forward. Where the Social Democrats who capitulated to the

nationalist war effort in 1914 and later denounced the new Soviet regime as premature⁵ were enthralled to a mechanical, evolutionary conception of the historical stages to be passed through on route to socialism, only after his reading of the *Logic*, so the story goes, was Lenin to embrace a greater flexibility. Commenting on the revolutionising effect of Lenin's encounter with Hegel, Kevin Anderson writes that thereafter Lenin's dialectics "is a theory of development through leaps, breaks, and negations rather than a variety of scientific evolutionism, as Engels's writings had suggested."⁶ Stathis Kouvelakis agrees when he argues that Lenin is concerned to distinguish "between 'evolution' according to Marx and the 'current idea of evolution,' the Marxian idea being one of evolution 'by leaps, catastrophes, revolutions.'"⁷ Even scholars outside of the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, influenced by the repetition of the motif, have absorbed it into their appraisal of Lenin's intellectual development. Antonio Negri, for instance, writes of "the tremendous importance that the theoretical consciousness of the dialectical leap had taken on in Lenin" after reading Hegel's *Logic*. The result that it is "impossible to read *The State and Revolution* without thinking of Lenin's study of Hegel's thought."⁸

While there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of such readers, there is, I believe, more going on here than simply an attempt to set the historical record straight. In placing such stress on Lenin's 1914 notebooks, the aim seems to be to demonstrate that there is a viable alternative to the Hegelian dialectics of classical dialectical materialism⁹ (converted into philosophical orthodoxy in the Soviet Union) as well as to the relatively apolitical strand to Western Hegelian-Marxism exemplified by the cultural critique of Adorno and Horkheimer. It is therefore essential for the proponents of the Hegelian-Marxist narrative that they present convincingly a sharp discontinuity between Lenin's 1914 writings on dialectics with those of Engels, Plekhanov and Kautsky and also with Lenin's own prior works. In this article, I call into question the evidence available for satisfying these criteria. By engaging the two most serious attempts to mount a case for the radical originality of Lenin's notebooks, Raya Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*¹⁰ and Kevin Anderson's *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*,¹¹ I seek to demonstrate that Hegelian-Marxists' claims to not stand up

to close scrutiny.¹² Indeed, my claim is that far from seeking to refound Marxist dialectics in his *Philosophical Notebooks* Lenin was grappling with its finer points in order to uphold a central concept of dialectical materialist orthodoxy: the idea of leaps between quantity and quality. I will show that this emphasis on quantity-quality leaps has been deliberately minimised in Dunayevskaya's and Anderson's accounts and also that the concept's emergence in Lenin's political writings is the most pronounced dialectical flourish Lenin brings to political works from 1914. These findings lead me to the conclusion that for all Lenin's undoubted achievements as a Marxist leader, tactician and theorist of the concrete political conjuncture, he does not transcend philosophically the dialectical materialism of his time. The idea of Lenin as a great innovator in dialectical theory, prefiguring strands of Western Marxism, should be seen as yet another attempt to interpolate what Lenin actually said with what certain authors wish he had said.

The article proceeds in four sections. In the first section I discuss the methodological difficulties involved in assessing the Hegelian-Marxist narrative. In the second I address the quotes Dunayevskaya and Anderson identify in support of the idea that Lenin breaks decisively from Engels's and Plekhanov's dialectics. In section three I turn to the concepts these Hegelian-Marxists consider Lenin's most radical break from Engels and Plekhanov: the 'unity of opposites' and 'self-movement'. Finally, in section four, I look at comments made by Lenin about dialectics after 1914, these presented by Dunayevskaya and Anderson as clues pointing towards the 'private' or 'secretive' Hegelianism Lenin harboured from this time onwards.

ON THE NARRATIVE: PROPONENTS AND OBJECTORS

Hegelian-Marxists attribute great importance to Lenin's 1914/15 *Philosophical Notebooks*, finding in Lenin's commentary upon Hegel's *The Science of Logic*, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and other works on dialectics numerous signs of revisions to his previous positions. The essential thrust of the narrative is that after breaking with the Second International in 1914, Lenin retreats from

political activity and conducts his in-depth study of Hegel in Switzerland in order to return to the origins of Marxism and to re-establish the revolutionary nature of dialectics against the method's degeneration into gradualism, reform and opportunism. After successfully completing his Hegel studies, Lenin then goes on to write his texts of 1915-17 that defend national liberation movements as the bacilli of communist revolution, argues for smashing the bourgeois state, and casts aside the idea that Russia needs to undergo a liberal, constitutional revolution in order to lay the groundwork for a socialist revolution. When combined, it is claimed that these innovations show that Lenin decisively abandons both the theoretical and strategic evolutionism of Second International Marxism. While Hegelian-Marxists do not credit these advances solely to Lenin's studies of Hegel, the implication is that they were pivotal in assisting their realisation. It was a "totally new departure" writes Dunayevskaya, that "*subsequently permeated Lenin's post-1915 writings in philosophy, politics, economics, and organization.*"¹³ In Anderson's words: "The path of Lenin's theoretical writings in 1914-17 – from notes on Hegel, to writings on imperialism and the self-determination of nations, and finally, to his theorizing on the state and revolution – was a very new one."¹⁴ In discovering in Hegel the centrality of subjectivity, humanist reason, self-movement, the unity of opposites, and the laws of cognition, Lenin's dialectics of revolution thereafter purportedly bear little in common with standard issue dialectical materialism.

Although this narrative has proved a popular one, critical perspectives have been brought to bear in assessing whether Lenin's reading of Hegel was really responsible for such a dramatic theoretical shift, or whether in fact any such shift took place. The first insists that Lenin always held to the primacy of practical wisdom over abstract conceptions of the dialectic. Louis Althusser provides a classic formulation of this perspective when he points to how Lenin's understanding of dialectics, from his 1894 book *What the Friends of the People' Are*¹⁵ to his 1914/15 *Philosophical Notebooks*, consistently emphasises the decisive advances Marx took towards a genuine science of society by going beyond the abstract formulas of Hegelian dialectics.¹⁶ Robert Mayer similarly questions the significance of Lenin's reading of Hegel and contends that Lenin was solely

concerned with the study of concrete political conjunctions and the need to adopt tactical flexibility at all times.¹⁷ Referring us to Lenin's section on dialectics in his 1904 book *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*,¹⁸ Mayer sees continuity in how Lenin approached dialectics pre and post 1914. What is more, Mayer observes, "the rhetoric of the dialectic actually became less frequent in Lenin's tactical writings after he studied Hegel."¹⁹

The second critical response, in line with increasing interest in the diversity of intellectual currents within Second International Marxism, has been to question the claim that Lenin puts forward a new political platform after 1914. Lars T. Lih argues that rather than forging a novel platform influenced by his reading of Hegel, Lenin's emphasis on the revolutionary potential of national self-determination movements in era of war and imperialism was derived in large part from the revolutionary wing of Social Democracy and Karl Kautsky's writings in particular.²⁰ For Lih, it is Lenin's aggressive defence of the 1912 Basle Manifesto and Kautsky's works such as his 1909 *The Road to Power* that provide the basis of Lenin's wartime political platform, not a newfound appreciation of Hegelian dialectics.²¹ If it seems that in late 1914 Lenin retreated from political involvement to embark on a lonely philosophical odyssey, this was far from the case. Lenin in fact launched himself into political activity during this time. Although the written record seems to indicate a lull in political activity, Lih concludes, this was only due to a temporary problem in getting access to a printing press in Switzerland.

Both perspectives provide valuable historical nuance that is often lacking in Hegelian-Marxist writing about Lenin's philosophical studies. One shortcoming of this literature, however, is that it tends to surrender the philosophical ground too easily. Althusser provides only a relatively superficial skim of Lenin's notebooks; Mayer contends that even if Lenin's ontology changed after reading Hegel it had little effect on his political thinking, not ruling out the possibility that Lenin made a sharp philosophical break from Engels and Plekhanov;²² and Lih also does not debate the philosophical claims of Hegelian-Marxists, relying on a conviction that the proof lies in the eating: that the effects of Lenin's study of Hegel should be expected to provide clear evidence of a change

of course in Lenin's political works after 1914. That Lih finds little evidence to support this claim for him renders superfluous speculation about the possible significance of Lenin's 1914 philosophical studies for his political analyses. In spite of the rich insights offered by Althusser, Mayer and Lih, then, I believe that their ambivalence about the philosophical contents of Lenin's notebooks make it too simple for Hegelian-Marxists to dismiss their arguments. Dunayevskaya, for example, makes clear that her account will remain inaccessible to those with a duff, empiricist ear, unable to hear the inner voice of Lenin's notebooks.²³ Anderson's account, resting on the contention that Lenin advanced an "ambivalent, secretive" Hegelianism from 1914 to his death, is also hard to respond convincingly to if one does not attend to the philosophical arguments Anderson puts forward regarding the novelties evinced by the notebooks. Hence my intention to fill in the philosophical lacuna in Althusser's, Mayer's and Lih's accounts by providing a close analysis of Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* and interrogating immanently Hegelian-Marxists' claims regarding their novelty.

However, given that Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* were not intended for publication and consist solely of a running commentary on Hegel's text there are methodological difficulties worth acknowledging from the outset. Since the implicit criteria of Hegelian-Marxism in the lineage of Lukács²⁴ and Marcuse²⁵ is that the closer to Hegel one moves the more one frees oneself from reductive materialism and scientism, then a close commentary on Hegel's *Logic* is always going to appear to represent an improvement upon works by Engels and Plekhanov that retain a critical disposition towards Hegel and extract elements of his thought considered of lasting value for Marxism. It follows that for Hegelian-Marxists every sign of Lenin affirming Hegel in his line by line reading of the *Logic* can be presented as a fundamental break with the more limited take on Hegel presented in original (published) Marxist works, making the domain of Hegelian concepts feeding into Lenin's supposed break from Engels and Plekhanov extremely wide ranging. Accordingly, in order to proscribe the scope of the material addressed, in this article I seek solely to evaluate the claim that Lenin's 'discovery' of breaks in gradualness in Hegel's text and his focus

on the ‘unity of opposites’ and ‘self-movement’ represents a significant advance in the formal theorisation of Marxist dialectics. Although it might be argued that this runs against the spirit of Hegelian dialectics, inasmuch as Hegel’s philosophy insists on the interconnection of all concepts, unless one surrenders any attempt to pin down how Lenin is supposed to have transcended classical dialectical materialism, then a certain thematic curtailment is unavoidable. This will prove especially so when we see how Hegelian-Marxists engage in a thematic curtailment of their own, systematically downplaying the centrality of the idea of quantity-quality leaps in Lenin’s notebooks. This omission, we will see, lies at the heart of the overly speculative arguments they present as to how Lenin’s reading of Hegelian dialectics in 1914 was radically original.

When approached in this way the Hegelian-Marxist argument can be seen as resting on three pillars. The first concerns Lenin’s alleged intention to accomplish “a theoretical refoundation of Marxism”²⁶ and hinges on negative references to Engels and Plekhanov made by Lenin in his notebooks. The second is the emphasis Lenin supposedly places on the ‘unity of opposites’ and ‘self-movement’ in his notebooks, which Hegelian-Marxists represent as a significant innovation beyond Engels’s and Plekhanov’s dialectics. The third concerns Lenin’s comments on dialectics in his texts written from 1915. Hegelian-Marxists are forced to explain away Lenin’s muted discussion of Hegel as the result of an “ambivalent, secretive Hegelianism”²⁷ withheld for purely strategic reasons. I deal first with the famous quotes which lie at the very foundations of the narrative.

THE FAMOUS QUOTES

For a thesis positing a radical break between Lenin’s dialectics and those of Second International Marxism, the Hegelian-Marxist case relies principally on just three comments where Lenin refers negatively to Plekhanov and Engels.²⁸ The first is an aphorism where Lenin writes that Plekhanov’s criticism of Kantianism was conducted “more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectical-materialist standpoint” failing to match Hegel’s correction of Kant by

“showing the connection and transitions of each and every concept.”²⁹ Anderson connects this comment to Lenin’s increasingly nuanced conception of the relationship between idealism and materialism, moving away from the strict demarcation of the two camps Lenin offered in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.³⁰ We are then led by Anderson accept that this quote singles out Lenin as the first Hegelian Marxist of the twentieth century – positioning Lenin as the forerunner to Lukács and Marcuse.

The problem with this claim is that it rests on speculation about changes that Lenin might have wanted to make to his encyclopaedia entry on Marx³¹ and to a critique of his own position in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* which in both cases Lenin did not actually carry out. Anderson seemingly wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants to claim that the structure of Lenin’s encyclopaedia entry on Marx, beginning with a discussion of philosophical dialectics and only then moving on to more concrete matters, marks a radical break with the theoretical *modus operandi* of the Second International (in fact, it repeats the structure of Engels’s *Anti-Dühring*³²) as well as claiming that Lenin’s request to make revisions to the entry, if the publisher had accepted it, would have shown evidence of an even more radical move towards endorsing philosophical idealism. Counterfactuals predominate.

The second famous quote is to be found in Lenin’s conspectus of Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where in a critical note nested in the section on the Socratics Lenin criticises the fact that amongst the immense collection of Plekhanov’s writings on dialectics “*about the large Logic, in connection with it, its thought (i.e., dialectics proper, as philosophical science) nil!*”³³ This Dunayevskaya describes as the moment when Lenin “completed the break with Plekhanov.”³⁴ Anderson concurs and ties it to a critique of revisionism and evolutionism. “These statements show the extent to which Lenin was breaking with the foundation of his early philosophic concepts, the concepts of both mainstream Bolshevism and Menshevism: Plekhanovite philosophical materialism.”³⁵ Yet it is far from clear why the quote warrants such a sweeping conclusion. Read literally, Lenin is merely reflecting with surprise that Plekhanov had

failed to comment on the *Logic* in his works on dialectics and feels that his engagement with the book makes his comprehension of dialectics deeper than Plekhanov's. It is a big leap to go from Lenin's apprehension of the limits of Plekhanov's epistemology to arguing that this marks a break from the tactical evolutionism of revolutionary Social Democracy. The necessary mediations are missing.

The third quote is near the start of Lenin's 1915 short essay 'On the Question of Dialectics' in which he defines dialectics as the splitting of the whole into contradictory parts. Lenin writes that the

correctness of this aspect of the content of dialectics must be tested by the history of science. This aspect of dialectics (e.g. in Plekhanov) usually receives inadequate attention: the identity of opposites is taken as the sum-total of *examples* ["for example, a seed,"] for example, primitive communism." The same is true of Engels. But it is "in the interests of popularisation..." and not as a *law of cognition* (and as a law of the objective world).³⁶

According to Anderson, Lenin is here advancing the heretical suggestion that even Engels had "vulgarized dialectics similar to the way in which Plekhanov had" and "it is clear that Lenin sees a need for Marxists to go more deeply into the Hegelian notion of contradiction than did Engels."³⁷ Given the importance of Engels's dialectics for Second International Marxism, this would be a radical assessment indeed. Yet the strongly pejorative characterisation of Lenin's comment is Anderson's own, since nowhere does Lenin himself accuse Engels of having vulgarised dialectics. Elsewhere in the notebooks, for instance, Lenin comments on Hegel's development of the Notion as "Quite right and important – it is precisely this that Engels repeated in popular form."³⁸ Here Lenin does not hold popularisation and vulgarisation to be equivalent value judgements.

When considering the many comments Lenin makes affirming Engels throughout his philosophical notebooks the quote's representation as a thoroughgoing break from Engels appears

even more fanciful. At the start of his notes on the Doctrine of Being, for example, Lenin writes: “I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels).”³⁹ And in contrast to Anderson’s view that only at the start of his conspectus on Hegel is Lenin “relying in important ways on Engels’s truncated view of the Hegel-Marx relationship”⁴⁰, by its close Lenin appears to remain satisfied with his earlier characterisation of his project, concluding that “Engels was right when he said that Hegel’s system was materialism turned upside down.”⁴¹ Indeed, where Lenin struggles to follow Hegel’s exposition, sees it as mired in obscurantism, or wishes to relate what he is reading to dialectical materialism, he repeatedly refers to Engels for guidance.⁴² Lenin continued to see Engels’s work as the best guide he had to Hegel’s dialectics.

What emerges from taking these quotes on their own terms, removed from the narrative framing they are given by Dunayevskaya and Anderson, is that not only do they struggle to support the heavy claims resting upon them, but also that they do not specifically address the dialectics of revolution. In order to read into these quotes the significance Dunayevskaya and Anderson attribute to them, additional arguments are needed to mediate between these epistemological themes and the dialectics of revolution. Dunayevskaya and Anderson do so by proposing that Lenin discovered new concepts which allowed him to escape the evolutionist interpretation of Hegel’s thought in the hands of Engels and Plekhanov: the unity of opposites and self-movement.

THE UNITY OF OPPOSITES AND SELF-MOVEMENT

Before addressing the arguments put forward regarding the significance of Lenin’s take on the unity of opposites and self-movement it is worth recalling the main points advanced by Engels’s books *Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. Since none of the Hegelian-Marxist narratives provide a reading of Engels’s books, presenting Engels’s attempt to build rapport between scientific and dialectical reasoning as the *sine qua non* of their ‘scientism’, ‘positivism’ and so forth, it is necessary

to recall Engels's key concepts in order to contrast them insightfully with Lenin's works. *Dialectics of Nature*, although never finished and unpublished in Lenin's lifetime, is particularly helpful in this respect since it presents Engels's main ideas in a positive form and brings clarity to the arguments made in a more polemical fashion in *Anti-Dühring*.

To adumbrate Engels's main points: first, the scientific advances of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, albeit comprising a significant advance in our comprehension of nature, have also given rise to a vulgarly mechanical metaphysics. Only by interpreting scientific developments through the categories forged by Western philosophy over the millennia can science be set on a sound footing and further contemporary scientific developments such as Darwinian evolution.⁴³ Second, three general laws of Hegel's dialectic are of the utmost importance for disinterring Hegel's revolutionary dialectical method from its conservative content: the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa; the interpenetration of opposites; and the negation of the negation.⁴⁴ These laws allow Marxist materialism to extract what is of lasting value from the Hegelian dialectic and are consistent with the project of inverting the primacy of ideas in Hegel to the primacy of matter in the development of dialectical cognition. Third, contradiction is omnipresent in nature and history. For Engels, even movement is a contradiction, as is the relationship between lower and higher mathematics.

Hegelian-Marxists do not deny that Engels's three laws of the dialectic are the same as those which Lenin also stresses in his reading of Hegel. They rather seek to find ways to differentiate Lenin's interpretation of these Hegelian concepts from Engels's in order to see Lenin's reading harbouring more revolutionary potential than how they were understood by Engels and Second International Marxism. Lenin's interpretation of the concept of the 'unity of opposites' assumes an especially privileged position in the argument. Insofar as it is a fundamental axiom of Hegel's dialectic (the identity of identity and difference) and one of Engels's three general laws of the Marxist dialectic, it is obviously not enough to see Lenin identifying its importance as indicative of a radical break with Engels. Dunayevskaya explains the difference in the following way: "his

[Lenin's] stress was not so much on the identity of opposites as on the transition from one to the other and the sharpening of the contradiction."⁴⁵ Dunayevskaya then relates this newly inflected concept to Lenin's writings on imperialism: on the inversion of imperialist aggression into the national liberation movements which present a new route to socialism.⁴⁶

We return to this point in the next section. For the time being it is enough to note some facts that undermine the putative novelty of the 'unity of opposites' considered as a sharpening of contradictions. The first is that the notion of the unity of opposites and their transformation into one another has a long pedigree in Russian revolutionary theory; this being an idea that Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov already laid emphasis on.⁴⁷ Perhaps these thinkers did not stress the sharpening of contradiction to the extent that Lenin did, but it is hard to tell since no evidence is presented to support the claim that Lenin's reading of Hegel led him to imbue the concept with a more extreme sense of dialectical contradiction. The second point that casts doubt on the novelty of this concept is that Lenin had already discussed the unity of opposites as the sharpening of contradictions. In his 1904 book *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, when discussing the split of the party into opposing factions, Lenin writes that

we see clearly that development does indeed proceed dialectically, by way of contradictions: the minority becomes the majority, and the majority becomes the minority; each side passes from the offensive to the defensive; the starting-point of ideological struggle ... is "negated" and gives place to an all-pervading squabble; but then begins "the negation of the negation" ... but by now this "thesis" has become enriched by the results of the antithesis and has become a higher synthesis ... In a word, not only do oats grow according to Hegel, but the Russian Social-Democrats war among themselves according to Hegel.⁴⁸

Lenin's framing of the events in a Hegelian turn of phrase is a little playful here. Nonetheless, all the elements that Dunayevskaya and Anderson attribute to Lenin's supposedly original interpretation of the concept in 1914 are plain to see already in 1904: the unity of opposites; the sharpening of contradictions; and the role of this process in moving forward the historical dialectic.

Third and finally, the unity of opposites and their inversion into one another is also connected by Lenin to the Hegelian idea perhaps most important to Engels: quantity to quality leaps. Lenin's proximity to Engels can be seen in how Lenin summarises his findings in a sixteen point summary of the dialectical method in his 'Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic'. Most of these points concern the multifacetedness of objectivity, but points nine, fifteen and sixteen are of particular significance since they refer specifically to the dialectics of transformation. Nine states: "Not only the unity of opposites, but the *transitions* of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into *every* other [into its opposite?]" ; fifteen states: "The struggle of content with form and conversely. The throwing off of the form, the transformation of the content"; and sixteen states: "The transition of quantity into quality and *vice versa*. ((15 and 16 are *examples* of 9))."⁴⁹ The way Lenin's links these ideas together admittedly has a more synthetic quality than does Engels's exposition in *Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*, but then again Lenin's intentions are different to Engels's. In both works, Engels is seeking to defend the compatibility of dialectics with science against philosophies that deny contradiction in nature. Lenin, in his notebooks, is concerned solely with extracting the essence of dialectic as such. Or as Engels puts it in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Hegel's "dialectical method... smothered beneath the overgrowth of the conservative side."⁵⁰ In other words, the two works cannot be evaluated according to the same standards.

Moreover, it would be remarkable that Lenin, if he really were intending to make a radical break from Engels, would place such importance on the leaps between quantity and quality. As a metaphysical concept of revolutionary change the notion was introduced implicitly by Engels and assumed a central place in Marxist theory in Plekhanov's and Kautsky's works.⁵¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, Dunayevskaya remains silent on the quantity-quality transformation, not

mentioning it once in her chapter devoted to Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. Anderson concedes Lenin's continuity with Engels on the quantity-quality transformation/breaks in gradualness, but seeks to account (quite unconvincingly in my opinion) for Lenin's summation as a lapse of mind, since there "is no evidence that this summation is the product of his [Lenin] having reviewed all his notes up to that point."⁵²

I would argue precisely oppositely that taken as a whole Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* in fact supports the idea that Lenin's summation, and the priority it afford to quantity-quality leaps, is an accurate reflection of his reading of Hegel. In his commentary on the Book on Being Lenin writes: "Further the transition of quantity into quality in the abstract-theoretical exposition is so obscure that nothing can be understood. Return to it!", to which he adds "[it] is a question of higher mathematics; cf. Engels on the differential and integral calculus."⁵³ When Lenin annotates in the margin to the page "Leaps! Breaks in Gradualness Leaps! Leaps!", he is also referring to the same sections of Hegel's *Logic* that Engels, Plekhanov and all subsequent dialectical materialists drew inspiration from. Understandably Anderson is thus rather coy in how he evaluates the novelty of Lenin's view on Hegelian quantity-quality leaps. But Anderson still argues that in appropriating this passage from Hegel Lenin is separating himself from "Plekhanov's more evolutionist interpretation. In Lenin's reading of Hegel, the stress is on breaks, leaps and discontinuities rather than on evolutionary historical stages."⁵⁴ Yet this statement is accompanied by no evidence that Plekhanov stressed the evolutionary compartment over the revolutionary, or that Lenin did vice versa. It is well-known that Plekhanov was given to an excessively reductionist and mechanistic interpretation of Marxism, when, for instance, he wrote that "Modern dialectical materialism cannot discover the mechanical explanation of history. That is, if you like, its weakness."⁵⁵ In itself, however, this tells us little about his interpretation of the quantity-quality leap. When Lenin observes in his notes on Hegel's *History of Philosophy* that "what distinguishes the dialectical transition from the undialectical transition" is "The leap. The contradiction. The interruption of gradualness"⁵⁶ this is a restatement of classical dialectical materialism in its Engelsian and

Plekhanovian cast, whether or not the stress is placed on its evolutionary or revolutionary dimension.

What of the idea of ‘self-movement’ attributed so much importance? As Anderson puts it, for Lenin the “key has become self-movement and not merely movement.”⁵⁷ It is true that Engels and Plekhanov talk simply of movement and not of self-movement and that Lenin emphasises the word ‘self’ in some passages, seeming to attribute importance to the nuance.⁵⁸ However, the significance granted the distinction by Hegelian-Marxists is speculative indeed. Dunayevskaya relates it to the “movement from the abstract to the concrete”, to Hegel’s Absolute Idea wherein restless negativity overcomes all sense of historical completion by transforming into revolutionary praxis.⁵⁹ Anderson mines a similarly speculative vein when he claims that the stress on ‘self’ upholds the spontaneity of the masses against the kind of economic determinism reliant upon “rigid stages either in concepts or in history.”⁶⁰

There are reasons to doubt, however, whether these allusions between self-movement with spontaneity and self-organisation really possess the significance for Lenin that Dunayevskaya and Anderson would have us believe. For one thing, nowhere in Lenin’s notebooks does he present the idea in such a way. In Lenin’s essay ‘On the Question of Dialectics’, for instance, self-movement is linked to the unity of opposites in contradistinction to philosophies that render the cause of movement in nature and history “external – God, subject etc.” The “living” dialectical conception, Lenin writes, “furnishes the key to the ‘leaps,’ to the ‘break in continuity,’ to the ‘transformation into the opposite,’ to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new.”⁶¹ Or to paraphrase, only dialectical self-movement explains the leaps between quantity and quality. The stress on ‘self’ in this passage therefore appears less to point in the direction of Hegel’s Absolute or to combat Engel’s alleged evolutionist dialectics (denying the self-conscious creativity of the masses), as it does to emphasise the immanence of dialectical movement as opposed to static metaphysical and theological alternatives – the programmatic centre of Engel’s *Anti-Dübring*.

Indeed, in a number of the philosophical conspectuses Lenin wrote after his study of Hegel's *Logic*, Lenin shows that for him there is no great distinction between movement and self-movement. For instance, in his notes on Lassalle's *Philosophy of Hericlitus* Lenin writes that the basic law of the world for Hericlitus is "the law of transformation into the opposite."⁶² Lenin then relates this to Hericlitus's anti-theological theory of movement and flux which he describes as a "very good exposition of the principles of dialectical materialism."⁶³ Elsewhere, in the section on Plato in his conspectus of Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, Lenin writes that nodal points, "the practice of mankind and human history", represent a "unity of contradictions, when Being and not-Being, as vanishing moments, coincide for a moment in the given moments of the movement (= of technique, of history, etc.)"⁶⁴ In a comment nested in Hegel's commentary on the Eleatic School Lenin also defends Engels against Chernov's objections to Engels's insistence on understanding movement as a dialectical contradiction.⁶⁵ Nowhere, let it be stressed, does Lenin repudiate Engels's presentation of movement as a contradiction, or chide Engels for failing to capture the importance of self-movement compared to mere movement. In short, there is no evidence to support the claim that Lenin's description of dialectics as self-movement is radically different to that of movement in Engel's work. In fact, Lenin says so himself: "Movement and 'self-movement'... who would believe that this is the core of 'Hegelianism'... This core had to be discovered, understood, hinüberretten [rescued], laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did."⁶⁶

DIALECTICS IN PRACTICE AFTER 1914

We have seen that the philosophical case for Lenin's break from Engels's and Plekhanov's conception of the dialectic relies on a meagre collection of quotes and on questionable inferences about the significance of Lenin's interpretation of the 'unity of opposites' and 'self-movement'. One would therefore expect that if the notebooks themselves do not provide clear evidence of a

radical break in Lenin's dialectics of revolution, then Lenin's more concrete theoretical writings on imperialism, Soviet democracy, and the transition from capitalism to communism would serve to fill in the gap. However, not only are Lenin's references to dialectics rather thin on the ground from 1915 onwards, but where dialectical flourishes embellish Lenin's political works it is precisely the orthodox Engelsian concept of the quantity-quality transformation that Dunayevskaya and Anderson do their best to minimise in their account of Lenin's notebooks. Accordingly, in order to assess Dunayevskaya's and Anderson's claim that Lenin harbours a "private" or "secretive Hegelianism" which traverses his theorisations after 1915 I first turn the instances where Lenin refers to Hegel and dialectics, judging if they can support this interpretation. I then turn to the increasing frequency of Lenin's use of the quantity-quality concept in his writings during this period and ask what implications it has for the defensibility of the Hegelian-Marxist narrative.

Although Hegelian-Marxists tend to associate practically all of Lenin's political positions after 1914 with his Hegel's studies – from his policy of revolutionary defeatism to his writings on imperialism and national liberation – much of this evidence is circumstantial, relying solely on the fact that these texts and positions were written after 1914 as *prima facie* evidence for their connection to the Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. Since the credibility one affords these claims relies on whether or not one accepts the Hegelian-Marxist narrative, I will focus only on the examples where Lenin refers explicitly to dialectics and Hegel. The four main instances include Lenin's comments about the capitulation of Kautsky and Plekhanov to nationalist chauvinism in Lenin's 1915 text *The Collapse of the Second International*; Lenin's review of Rosa Luxemburg's 'Junius Pamphlet' in 1916; a critique of Nikolai Bukharin's 'eclecticism' in his 1921 pamphlet 'Once Again on the Trade Unions'; and his letter to the journal *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* encouraging its contributors and editors to become a "Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics", devoted to the "systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint."⁶⁷ Let us take them in turn.

The Collapse of the Second International, a critique of Plekhanov and Kautsky's promotion of national-chauvinism with the onset of war, is principally concerned with a defence of the ideals of

the 1912 Basle Manifesto which Lenin held these thinkers to have betrayed. But buried in the text there are also passing comments about Hegel and dialectics. Lenin criticises Plekhanov's justification for war as setting "a new record in the noble sport of substituting sophistry for dialectics" since it was "Hegel who long ago very properly observed that 'arguments' can be found to prove anything in the world." Lenin also credits Clausewitz's insights on war as being "stimulated by Hegel."⁶⁸ Anderson does not relate these comments to specific passages in Hegel's *Logic*, but contends that such an "explicit and uncritical" reference to Hegelian dialectics "was unprecedented not only for Lenin but for the whole tradition of Marxism out of which Bolshevism emerged."⁶⁹ Both claims are problematic. Besides the fact that the first contention is not true (as we saw in the excerpt from *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*), even more contentious is whether there are any Hegelian dialectics on evidence here which stretch beyond classical dialectical materialism. When, for instance, Lenin insists on reducing "the seeming... to the fundamental motive forces, to the development of the productive forces and to the class struggle"⁷⁰ he is providing a classical statement of dialectical materialist orthodoxy. Moreover, the rub of Lenin's critique does not rest on any particular failing in abstract dialectical reasoning but rather in Plekhanov's failure to study the "economic and diplomatic history of at least the past three decades" and the sophistical "habit of citing instances that refer to situations that are dissimilar in principle."⁷¹ Lenin's objection lies in the erroneous nature of the comparison Plekhanov and Kautsky draw with Marx and Engels's support for wars of the nineteenth century, which had a historical context different to the imperialist bellicosity of the early twentieth century. Where, we might ask, are the Hegelian dialectics in this critique? The actual content of Lenin's critique instead seems to give force to Althusser's and Mayer's representation of Lenin's dialectical practice as grounded firmly in the empirical concrete.

Anderson provides a similarly one-sided reading of Lenin's review of Rosa Luxemburg's 'Junius Pamphlet' when he extracts its more abstract aspects and removes them from Lenin's insistence on concrete analysis. Anderson quotes Lenin's comment that "all dividing lines, both in

nature and society, are conventional and dynamic, and that every phenomenon might, under certain conditions, be transformed into its opposite”⁷², relating this to Hegel’s *Logic* as an explanation for why Lenin considers Luxembourge to apply Marxist dialectics “only halfway.” Yet Anderson cuts out Lenin’s positive description of dialectical practice where he states that “we remain dialecticians and we combat sophistry not by denying the possibility of all transformations in general, but by analysing the *given* phenomenon in its concrete setting and development.”⁷³ As with *The Collapse of the Second International*, these comments are completely in keeping with how Lenin presents the dialectical method in his 1894 *Who the ‘Friends of the People’ Are*.

The section on dialectics near the end of Lenin’s 1921 ‘Once Again on the Trade Unions’ is more obviously influenced by his reading of the *Logic*. Lenin criticises Bukharin’s recommendation of installing a buffer group between Lenin and Trotsky’s factions over their debates regarding the freedom of trade union organisation in the new Soviet state. Lenin criticises Bukharin for holding to an eclectic position of “on the one hand, and on the other”⁷⁴ and relates this to Bukharin’s adherence to arid formal logic. These comments provide perhaps the clearest sign of his reading of the *Logic* making an impact on his political critique, especially Hegel’s critique of syllogistic judgement. Lenin insists that an attempt be made to examine all the interconnections between objects, taken in its state of constant change, and that the object’s definition “must include the whole of human experience.”⁷⁵ Problematically for Anderson’s argument, however, Lenin then relates this account of the dialectical method to Plekhanov’s work regarding which he writes that “nothing better has been written on Marxism anywhere in the world.”⁷⁶

Finally, possibly the most significant sign of Lenin’s newfound appreciation of Hegelian dialectics lies in his comments in ‘On the Significance of Militant Materialism’ in which he advises a “systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint” by taking as “our basis Marx’s method of applying materialistically conceived Hegelian dialectics.”⁷⁷ Again, although this quote appears to evidence a newfound interest in Hegel it is not enough to qualify as a radical break from existing dialectical materialism. Elsewhere in the letter Lenin also advocates

propagation of knowledge about the work of eighteenth century materialists, not to endorse their arguments but to insist upon promoting a well-rounded knowledge of materialist and atheist thought amongst the masses. There is no reason to think that his recommendations vis-à-vis Hegel are written in a different spirit. The problem is that when it comes to Lenin's post-1914 writings, for Hegelian-Marxists the mere mention of Hegel seems to suffice as proof of Lenin reaching towards the Hegelian-Marxist paradigm even whilst he continues to frame his appreciation of Hegelian dialectics in classically dialectical materialist terms. As stressed in this article, however, the Hegelian-Marxist narrative rests on proving Lenin's break from the dialectical materialism of Engels, Plekhanov and Kautsky as well as Lenin's own writings before 1914. Since Lenin's actual writing on dialectics show no such thing, force of assertion and allusion is compelled to take the places of firm evidence.

Dunayevskaya and Anderson are even forced to lean towards the conspiratorial when accounting for the rather muted and insubstantial discussions of dialectics in Lenin's theoretical works after 1914. This they attribute to a "private" and "ambivalent, secretive Hegelianism" on Lenin's part. In this account, Lenin, lacking the time and strategic need to spread the good word of his conversion to Hegelian idealism, is forced to keep his newfound convictions mostly to himself. Dunayevskaya writes on the reason for the privacy of Lenin's embrace of Hegel that its lies

deep in the recesses of time, revolution, and counter-revolution. Too short were the years between 1914 and 1917, between 1917 and 1923. Too daring was the November Revolution in Russia, and too many the aborted and missed revolutions elsewhere. Too overwhelming were the concrete problems of this great historic event, objective and subjective, including what Lenin called cultural backwardness.⁷⁸

Which could be paraphrased: Lenin did not have the time to discuss Hegel. Anderson also proffers numerous explanations for why Lenin did not publicly denounce Plekhanov's writings on dialectics, approved the publication of a new edition his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1920, and continued to understand dialectics within the contours of classical dialectical materialism. Anderson speculates that Lenin might have been wary of the ideological resistance he would encounter in coming out as a Hegelian, that he may have forgotten parts of his reading of Hegel, and that he may have been personally ambivalent about the extent of his own philosophical breakthrough. The upshot of both accounts is that we are left with an excess of reasons to explain the absence of the assumed phenomenon in question. Lih (2014) cuts to the heart of this problem when he writes that the problem with these accounts is that they provide "an ingenious explanation for something that needs no explanation, because it didn't happen." The reason why Lenin did not make more of his reading of Hegel was that it was not intended to be, nor did it result in, a radical break from Engels's and Plekhanov's dialectics.

If we run with the hypothesis that rather than seeking to refound Marxist dialectics, Lenin was instead seeking to deepen his understanding of the existing dialectical materialism of his time, I believe this can better shed light on the role of dialectics in Lenin's post-1914 theoretical works. As was shown in the previous sections, both Dunayevskaya and Anderson downplay the idea of quantity-quality leaps stressed in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, no doubt due to the importance of the idea for Engels, Plekhanov and Kautsky. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Dunayevskaya and Anderson also have little to say about the novel appearance of this concept in Lenin's post-1914 work either. For instance, in *Imperialism* Lenin sought to conceptualise and justify his argument of the transformation of capitalism into imperialism in precisely this way:

I have quoted detailed statistics which enable one to see to what degree bank capital, etc., has grown, in what precisely the transformation of quantity into quality, of developed capitalism into imperialism, was expressed. Needless to say, of course, all

boundaries in nature and in society are conventional and changeable, and it would be absurd to argue, for example, about the particular year or decade in which imperialism “definitely” became established.⁷⁹

This is not the only example of the idea of quantity-quality leaps making its entry into Lenin’s theoretical work during this time. In *State and Revolution* when seeking to explain the difference between Soviet democracy and democracy under liberal Parliamentaryism Lenin also draws on the concept:

Thus the [Paris] Commune appears to have substituted “only” fuller democracy for the smashed state machine... But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies the very important substitution of one type of institution for others of a fundamentally different order. This is a case of “*quantity becoming transformed into quality*”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is generally conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy.⁸⁰

Or consider the way that Lenin conceptualised the transformation from capitalism to communism in his economic writings from 1915. Lenin advocated a quantitative extension of capitalist Fordist production methods and of the banking system as a way to induce a quantity-quality transformation towards a socialist mode of production.

The big banks are the ‘state apparatus’ which we need to bring about socialism, and which we take ready-made from capitalism; our task here is merely to lop off what capitalistically mutilates this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality.⁸¹

As with his analysis in *Imperialism* and *State and Revolution*, never before had Lenin conceptualised transformation in this way before. Yet neither, let it be repeated, was there anything particularly exceptional about these remarks. The idea of transformation as a quantity-quality leap had been enshrined as a key law of Marxist dialectics by Engels in *Anti-Duhring* and had already been marshalled forcefully as a defence of the necessity of revolutionary transformation by Kautsky in *The Social Revolution* and by Plekhanov in *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*.

These examples thus give further weight to the reading of the *Philosophical Notebooks* advanced in the previous section. If there is continuity between Lenin's writings on dialectics before and after 1914, if Lenin continued to praise Plekhanov's dialectical materialism, and if the Engelsian law of the quantity-quality leap is stressed in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* and embellishes his theoretical writings after 1914, then a lot of tortuous reasoning can be dispensed with by abandoning the Hegelian-Marxist narrative. Rather than seeking to refound Marxist dialectics in 1914, the evidence suggests that Lenin was instead aiming to deepen his comprehension of Hegel so to better defend classical dialectical materialism. After his studies of Hegel Lenin took with him some of his newly acquired conceptual and rhetorical tools, but these were integrated into a relatively orthodox account of Marxist dialectics. Like his aggressive of revolutionary Social Democracy from 1914, abandoned with reckless regard by Kautsky and Plekhanov in their embrace of opportunism with the onset of war, Lenin returned to Hegel not to break from but to enrich his understanding of dialectical materialism.

That Lenin did not innovate a new form of Marxist dialectics but to defend a tradition should not be seen as a smear against his reputation. Just because it does not confer with the Hegelian-Marxist narrative of Lenin prefiguring Lukács and Marcuse, does nothing to diminish his reputation as a Marxist strategist and thinker. Althusser and Mayer get it right when they identify Lenin's real practice of dialectics as consistently empirical and flexible to the circumstances of the given conjuncture. It is a unique prejudice of the idealist Hegelian-Marxist tradition that one's abstract philosophy should assume a primary role in shaping one's concrete strategic thought. So

even though refound Marxist dialectics this does nothing to lessen the brilliance of his concrete analyses and the political acumen of his strategic interventions. Only an idealist quite unlike Lenin would believe otherwise.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the twentieth century Lenin has served as something like a Rocha test onto which thinkers can project their fears and hopes. A villain to some, a hero to others; too rarely is Lenin's thought approached in a non-partisan way attentive to his position with the broader Marxist movement and the philosophical context of his time. The desire to singularise Lenin's contributions or to locate the fall of Marxism in his figure has resulted in readings of his work that while often provocative tend to interpolate what he actually said with what some wish he had said. This article will have been successful if it has persuaded the reader that this problem also traverses the Hegelian-Marxist narrative. For humanists wishing to identify a philosophical alternative to Stalinist dialectical materialism, doing so by recourse to Hegel's idealism, the confluence of Lenin's reading of Hegel's *Logic* with the chain of events leading to the Russian Revolution is surely an irresistible lure. It promises to capture a Lenin-in-becoming whose greatest political achievements owe their guidance to a philosophy quite different to that which Stalin formalised in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*. That Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* do not in fact corroborate this story should, however, lead us not only to be more critical of Dunayevskaya and Anderson's narrative but also of attempts more generally to ground speculatively the provenance of our philosophies in the canon of great political thinkers. Enough time has now passed to appraise Lenin on what he actually said and did without this. Lenin's thought remains a productive site for historical research which can stand on its own two feet.

Notes

I wish to thank Lars T. Lih for making insightful comments on an earlier draft of this article and for generously sharing his database of historical research with me. I also wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their helpful suggestions for improvements.

¹ V.I. Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (The Crisis in Our Party),” in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 7*, edited by Clemens Dutt, translated by Abraham Fineberg and Naomi Jochel (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961), 409.

² V.I. Lenin, “Conspectus of Hegel’s Book The Science of Logic,” in *Collected Works, Vol. 38, Philosophical Notebooks*, edited by Stewart Smith, translated by Clemens Dutt, 84–238. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961), 123.

³ Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought* (London and New York: Verso, 2009 [1924])

⁴ One measure of the orthodox status this narrative has taken on includes its thematic dominance of the section entitled ‘Lenin in Philosophy’ in the edited collection Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis, and Slavoj Žižek (eds.), *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 101-204.

⁵ See Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. Translated by H.J. Stenning. 2nd ed. (Manchester: The National Labour Press, 1918b).

⁶ Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism: A Critical Study* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press. 1995), 25.

⁷ Stathis Kouvelakis, “Lenin as a Reader of Hegel,” in *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, Sebastian Budgen, and Stathis Kouvelakis (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 174.

⁸ Antonio Negri, *Factory of Strategy: Thirty-Three Lessons on Lenin*. Translated by Arianna Bove. Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 161-162.

⁹ Although Engels called his dialectical philosophy in *Anti-Dühring* ‘modern materialism’, Plekhanov relabelled it ‘dialectical materialism’. See Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)*. Edited by C.P. Dutt. Translated by Emile Burns. The Marxist-Leninist Library 1 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1936a), 31; Georgi Plekhanov, ‘The Materialist Conception of History,’ in *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 106. For of a secondary account of the origins of dialectical materialism see Z.A. Jordan, *The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism: A Philosophical and Sociological Analysis* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1967), 66-67.

¹⁰ Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973).

¹¹ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*.

¹² Another reason for focusing exclusively on these Hegelian-Marxists accounts is that other variations are mostly derivative of Dunayevskaya and Anderson’s work. Especially when focusing on the supposed philosophical contributions of Lenin, they do not add anything substantially new to the discussion.

¹³ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 100-101.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 134.

¹⁵ V. I. Lenin, “What the ‘Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats (A Reply to Articles in Russkoye Bogatstvo Opposing the Marxists),” in *Collected Works, Vol. 1*. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960).

¹⁶ See the essays in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Robert Mayer, “Lenin and the Practice of Dialectical Thinking,” *Science & Society* 63, no. 1 (1999), 40–62.

¹⁸ Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,” 407-413.

¹⁹ Mayer, “Lenin and the Practice of Dialectical Thinking,” 43.

²⁰ Lih draws on the following works: Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*. Translated by A.M. and May Wood Simons (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1916); Karl Kautsky, *The Road to Power: Political Reflection on Growing into the Revolution*. Edited by John H. Kautsky. Translated by Raymond Meyer (Center for Socialist History, 2007); Karl Kautsky, “The Consequences of the Japanese Victory and Social Democracy (July 1905),” in *Witness to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record*, edited and translated by Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido, 386–408. Historical Materialism Book Series 21 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009); Karl Kautsky, “The Slavs and Revolution (1902),” in *Witness to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record*, edited and translated by Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido, 59–65. Historical Materialism Book Series 21 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

²¹ Lars T. Lih, “‘The New Era of War and Revolution’: Lenin, Kautsky, Hegel and the Oubreak of World War I,” in *Catachysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics*, edited by Alexander Anievas. Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2014).

²² See Mayer, “Lenin and the Practice of Dialectical Thinking,” 50.

²³ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 103.

- ²⁴ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971); Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1975).
- ²⁵ Exemplary is Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1941).
- ²⁶ Kouvelakis, "Lenin as a Reader of Hegel," 168.
- ²⁷ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 98.
- ²⁸ In this article I do not consider Lenin's aphorism: "It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx." (Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 180) The reasons for this are as follows. First, because that Lenin does not follow up on the comment in any way; it a single fragmentary comment on the relationship between Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic* unconnected to anything else in the notebook. Second, because it does not pertain directly to the dialectics of revolution where the strongest claims of the Hegelian-Marxist narrative rest. Third, because the question of Hegel's influence on the construction of Marx's *Capital*, alluded to by Lenin, is notoriously unresolved. To do justice to the topic would entail a discussion of the vast literature associated with this question and would prove unmanageable within the scope of this article. For one examples of the 'new dialectics' literature on the Hegel-Marx connection in *Capital* see Christopher J. Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).
- ²⁹ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 179.
- ³⁰ V.I. Lenin, "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy," in *Collected Works, Vol. 14*, edited by Clemens Dutt, translated by Abraham Fineberg (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1962).
- ³¹ V.I. Lenin, "Karl Marx (A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism)," in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 21*, edited by Julius Katzer, 43–91. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964).
- ³² Engels, *Anti-Dühring*
- ³³ V.I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," in *Collected Works, Vol. 38, Philosophical Notebooks*, edited by Stewart Smith, translated by Clemens Dutt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961), 277.
- ³⁴ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 105.
- ³⁵ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 103.
- ³⁶ V.I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," in *Collected Works, Vol. 38, Philosophical Notebooks*, translated by Clemens Dutt and Stewart Smith, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961), 359.
- ³⁷ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 105.
- ³⁸ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 264.
- ³⁹ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 104.
- ⁴⁰ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 59.
- ⁴¹ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 234.
- ⁴² Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 108,109,118,141,169, 214, 234; Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 253, 259, 264, 285, 308.
- ⁴³ Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*. Translated by Clemens Dutt. The Marxist-Leninist Library 19 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1941), 7.
- ⁴⁴ Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 26.
- ⁴⁵ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 99.
- ⁴⁶ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 105.
- ⁴⁷ See Georgi Plekhanov, "The Development of the Monist View of History," in *Georgi Plekhanov Selected Philosophical Works Vol. I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 553, 632. See also Mayer, "Lenin and the Practice of Dialectical Thinking," 46.
- ⁴⁸ Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," 409.
- ⁴⁹ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 221-222.
- ⁵⁰ Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. Edited by C.P. Dutt. The Marxist-Leninist Library 2. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1936), 23.
- ⁵¹ See Georgi Plekhanov, "A New Champion of Autocracy, Or, Mr. L. Tikhomirov's Grief," in *Georgi Plekhanov Selected Philosophical Works Vol. I* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 413-421; Georgi Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 43; Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, 17.
- ⁵² Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 91.
- ⁵³ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 117.
- ⁵⁴ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 42.
- ⁵⁵ Plekhanov, "Once Again Mr. Mikhailovsky," 699.
- ⁵⁶ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 284.
- ⁵⁷ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 45.
- ⁵⁸ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book The Science of Logic," 141, 209, 229.
- ⁵⁹ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 13, 33, 115.

-
- ⁶⁰ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 33.
- ⁶¹ Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," 360.
- ⁶² V.I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Lasalle's Book The Philosophy of Hericlitus the Obscure of Ephesus," in *Collected Works, Vol. 38, Philosophical Notebooks*, edited by Stewart Smith, translated by Clemens Dutt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961e), 346.
- ⁶³ Lenin, "Conspectus of Lasalle's Book The Philosophy of Hericlitus," 349.
- ⁶⁴ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 280.
- ⁶⁵ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 259.
- ⁶⁶ Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Book Lectures on the History of Philosophy," 141.
- ⁶⁷ V.I. Lenin, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism," in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 33* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1966), 234, 233.
- ⁶⁸ V.I. Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 21*, edited by Julius Katzner (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), 218-219.
- ⁶⁹ Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, 110.
- ⁷⁰ Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," 218.
- ⁷¹ Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," 218, 220.
- ⁷² V.I. Lenin, "Junius Pamphlet," in *Collected Works, Vol. 21*, edited by George Hanna, translated by Yuri Sdobnikov (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964c), 309.
- ⁷³ Lenin, "Junius Pamphlet," 309.
- ⁷⁴ V.I. Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin," in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works Vol. 32*, edited by Clemens Sdobnikov (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), 91.
- ⁷⁵ Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions," 94.
- ⁷⁶ Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions," 94.
- ⁷⁷ Lenin, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism," 233, 234.
- ⁷⁸ Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution*, 117.
- ⁷⁹ V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism," in *Collected Works, Vol. 21*, edited by George Hanna, translated by Yuri Sdobnikov (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), 267.
- ⁸⁰ V.I. Lenin, "State and Revolution," in *Essential Works of Lenin*, edited by Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover Books, 1987), 301.
- ⁸¹ V.I. Lenin, "Can the Bolshheviks Retain State Power?," in *Collected Works, Vol. 26*, edited by George Hanna, translated by Yuri Stobnikov and George Hanna (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964), 106.