Materialism and Empirio-Criticism:
A Study of V.I. Lenin's
Dialectical Materialist Philosophy

an Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Jerry Barmore

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Paul Hamori

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
April, 1991
Materialism and Empirio-Criticism
A Study of V.I Lenin's
Dialectical Materialist Philosophy

Table of Contents

1. Preface
2. Introduction
3. Sensation and Perception
4. Matter and Consciousness
5. Matter as an Epistemological Category
6. Matter and Motion
7. The Thing-In-Itself
8. The Nature of Truth
9. Time and Space
10. Hieroglyph Versus Reflection Theory
11. Empirio-Criticism and Solipsism
12. Empirio-Criticism and Religion
13. Economic Determinism Versus Biological Mysticism
14. Social Being and Social Consciousness
15. Kantianism: Left and Right Criticism
16. Parties in Philosophy
Preface

This manuscript was assembled in the course of the 1988-89 academic year while completing an undergraduate research fellowship under the mentorship of Dr. Paul Hamori. In examining the dialectical materialism of V.I. Lenin, as expounded in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, an attempt was made to provide the reader with a brief, yet thorough synopsis of the main arguments of the work so as to present Lenin's philosophy with greater clarity and brevity than was the case in the original work. While Lenin's impact upon the world has been tremendous, and his ideas once commanded an immense following, many of the works in which he expressed his ideas were written with a specific audience in mind and dealt with issues and controversies which were peculiar to his age. In addition, it is probably fair to say that Lenin's skills as a political agitator were superior to his skills as a writer. Consequently, the project which culminated in the completion of this manuscript posed a number of challenges.

In Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Lenin's presentation of his theses ranges from obscure to redundant, and the contemporary reader is often hard pressed to understand subtle references which were undoubtedly common knowledge in the circle of Russian emigres in which Lenin moved in the early 1900's, but which can be difficult to make sense of out of historical context. In addition, Lenin's treatment of the problems of philosophy is loaded with political relevance. Indeed, it may be said that Materialism and Empirio-Criticism represents not as much a treatise on philosophy as a manifesto of what its author believed Marxist philosophy should be.
Consequently, a greater emphasis was placed on discovering the political motives underlying Lenin's philosophical convictions than on a mere reporting of those convictions as put forward in the work.

Despite these difficulties, it is believed that the final work represents a satisfying summary treatment of the material which will greatly aid not only in the understanding of Lenin's conception of dialectical materialism, but also of his political convictions, as well as something of his character.

MLA style was adhered to in the preparation of the manuscript. All quotations are from Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and are therefore cited by page number only. Items enclosed in quotation marks within the text are generally uncited since they are presented either in an effort to convey the flavor of Lenin's prose or to provide examples of terminologies which were central to the debate and recur throughout the text. All italics in indented text are Lenin's.

It should be clearly noted that this work represents a collaborative effort. Dr. Hamori's involvement in this project was both continual and enthusiastic. His insistence on excellence and his guidance through ceaseless revisions greatly contributed to the quality of the final product. In retrospect, I view my experience in working with Dr. Hamori as having been both a privilege and a pleasure and am glad to have had the opportunity to participate in the undergraduate research fellowship program.
Vladimir Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* as a response to those philosophical "revisionists" within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party who -- influenced by the work of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenerius -- attempted to substitute idealist principles for the traditional materialism of Marx, as developed by Engels and Plekhanov. Such attempts infuriated Lenin because he considered them a betrayal of classical Marxism and an abandonment of dialectical materialism.

The empirio-critics (whom Lenin referred to as "Machians" throughout the text) sought to reconcile the contradiction between materialism and idealism by combining the two philosophies into a single body of thought. In so doing, they called into question the sanctity of established Marxist doctrine on such fundamental problems as the accuracy of sense perception, the existence of matter, and the nature of truth. The empirio-critics also claimed that their system of thought was consistent with "recent" philosophical developments, a claim whose truth Lenin vehemently contested. On the whole, it might be said that the empirio-critics attempted to synthesize materialism and idealism into a new system which would transcend all previous philosophy.

The empirio-critics claimed that their work was characterized by an ability to apply new modes of thought and new approaches to problems in an effort to improve upon Marxism from within. They sought to surpass and update the traditional orthodoxy of Engels and Plekhanov by drawing on
then current epistemological developments. Lenin strongly objected to this approach and branded it a deviation from Marxism. In writing *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, it was Lenin's intention to express his unmitigated opposition to this new trend, to expose it as an idealist aberration from true Marxism, and to curb its influence within the party.
Both the materialists and the empirio-criticists identified sensation as the fundamental source of all human knowledge. The assertion that one knows the world only through his sensations was accepted by both Lenin and his philosophical opponents as a basic truth. Beneath this concurrence, however, there was a sharp disagreement concerning the ultimate source and essential nature of sensation as it applies to the sphere of perception. Lenin considered this problem a crucial one as it involved the larger issue of the primacy of matter over mind, an issue which Lenin regarded as the core of classical Marxist philosophy.

In the development of their philosophy, the empirio-criticists sought to eliminate the traditional distinction between the concept of matter and that of ideas. In order to avoid being labeled either materialists or idealists, they devised new categories and new terminologies through which to express their thought. In accord with this, they used the term "element" -- a concept which they felt transcended philosophical one-sidedeness -- to describe what they believed to be the principal component of reality. The empirio-criticists considered sensation to be a more accurate measure of reality than matter and argued that what appear as physical realities are actually composed of "complexes of sensations." The objects of perception, they claimed, are actually specific arrangements of sensation which appear to the subject as physical entities. In short, the empirio-criticists regarded the materialist assumption of an independently existing physical reality as a naive self
deception.

Lenin rejected the philosophy of the empirio-criticsists as a trivial embellishment of antiquated idealist and solipsist thinking which wavered indecisively between materialism and idealism. In his opinion, the introduction of new terminologies only served to further confuse an already muddled and inconsistent system of thought. He also alleged that the empirio-criticsists had misinterpreted the role of sensation and had ignored the importance of the interaction of material entities in the sphere of cognition.

Lenin regarded perception as a purely physiological process which occurs as a result of the action of physical stimuli on the sense organs of the subject. Leaning on Engels' Anti-Dühring, he asserted that sensation represents a reflection of external reality in the mind of the subject. In Lenin's view, sensations are perceived as images of external material entities and do not exist as entities in themselves. Having defined sensation as an image or reflection of external reality, he maintained that sensation could not exist without an a priori reality and concluded that sensation is a secondary phenomenon which derives its existence from some particular embodiment of matter.

Lenin claimed that the materialist theory of perception presented an accurate model of reality and provided a true knowledge of the world. In contrast, he added, empirio-criticism constituted an obstacle to our knowledge of the world as it really is because of its claim that through sensory observations one could never be certain as to whether a material entity actually existed or not. Lenin censured the
empirio-criticists for questioning the reliability of sense perception and considered their mistrust of sensory experience a fundamental weakness of their philosophy. Lenin viewed sensation as a medium which serves to link the human consciousness to external reality. He further claimed that the materialist theory of perception had been confirmed by 19th century discoveries in natural science and that it conformed to the common sense conception of the world.

For every scientist who has not been led astray by professorial philosophy, as well as for every materialist, sensation is indeed the direct connection between consciousness and the external world; it is the transformation of the energy of external excitation into a state of consciousness. This transformation has been, and is, observed by each of us a million times on every hand (sic). The sophism of idealist philosophy consists in the fact that it regards sensation as being not the connection between consciousness and the external world, but as a fence, a wall, separating consciousness from the external world -- not as an image of the external phenomenon corresponding to the sensation, but as the "sole entity (44)."

Lenin cited the perception of color as an example of the interaction of material entities which he considered essential to the cognitive process. He noted that color is perceived as a result of the action of light waves on the retina. In his thinking, this served as proof that an external material reality (light) acts upon a sense organ (the retina)
to transmit a sensation (color) to the brain. In this analysis, Lenin clearly regarded light as matter. Dialectical materialist philosophy, as expounded by Lenin, regarded all external realities as material by definition and disputed the notion of objectively existing nonmaterial realities. In accord with this, he identified light waves as material realities by virtue of their existence independently of the perceiving subject. This postulate, which would seem to contradict the common sense view of matter, was based on an exclusively epistemological definition of matter and represents a primary principle of Lenin's dialectical materialism as well as a key to the understanding of his conception of reality.
Matter and Consciousness

Lenin characterized the empirio-critics' conception of matter as an idealist departure from the fundamental materialist principles of Marxism. According to Lenin, the empirio-critics had defined matter as an "abstract symbol" whose only significance was to denote the existence of stable groupings of sensations. In his opinion, this interpretation reduced itself to a denial of the existence of external reality in general and of any objective material reality in particular. The empirio-critics, he argued, subscribed to an idealist interpretation of matter in that they identified matter as a conception originating in human consciousness rather than as an objective entity which exists independently of, and prior to, one's perception of it. In their explanation of matter as a by-product of human consciousness, Lenin continued, the empirio-critics had rejected the primacy of matter over mind and had begun "rolling down an inclined plane (170)" into the bottomless pit of idealist philosophy.

Lenin regarded the primacy of matter as the fundamental assertion of dialectical materialism to which all other questions of philosophy were subordinate. The empirio-critics, he charged, had denied this basic truth and had instead placed the cart before the horse by deriving the existence of matter from that of consciousness rather than vice versa. For Lenin, consciousness was a property of highly developed organic matter which enabled human beings (and other living things) to sense the nature of their surroundings and respond to their environment in an appropriate manner.
Consciousness was, in Lenin's view, matter endowed with sensation.

Materialism, in full agreement with natural science, takes matter as primary and regards consciousness, thought and sensation as secondary because in its well-defined form sensation is associated only with the higher forms of matter (organic matter)... (38).

Lenin's explanation of consciousness as a property of matter was coupled with his admission that neither materialist philosophy nor natural science had determined why consciousness manifests itself in some material entities (i.e. living organisms) and (presumably) not in others (inanimate objects). Lenin maintained that although dialectical materialism had not yet provided an answer to the question as to why only certain arrangements of matter acquire consciousness, this philosophy was consistent with the scientific approach necessary to do so eventually.

There still remains to be investigated and reinvestigated how matter, apparently entirely devoid of sensation, is related to matter which, though composed of the same atoms (or electrons), is yet endowed with a well-defined faculty of sensation. Materialism clearly formulates the (sic) as yet unsolved problem and thereby stimulates the attempt to solve it, to undertake further experimental investigation (39).
Matter as an epistemological category

The empirio-criticists considered the materialist interpretation of reality an obsolete doctrine whose fundamental views had been rendered untenable by the advance of science and philosophy. In their thinking, the findings of post-Newtonian physics had clearly demonstrated the inadequacy of traditional Marxist philosophy and necessitated a more flexible approach to the problems of philosophy than was characteristic of the work of Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov.

The empirio-criticists charged that materialist philosophy had been unable to develop a working definition of matter. Although all materialists held a consensus that the objects of perception are composed of substantive physical "stuff," none had been able to offer a concrete definition of matter which could stand the test of science. They further contended that the traditional Marxist view concerning the primacy of matter represented little more than a repetition of a vague formula by which the materialists evaded the crucial issue: what is the nature of matter?

The empirio-criticists seem to have believed that all materialist philosophy rested on the assumption of the existence of a finite physical "building block" of which all realities are composed and beyond which no reality could be further reduced in scope. According to the empirio-criticists, the discovery of sub-atomic particles had invalidated this fundamental assumption of materialism and represented a corroboration of their own system of thought. They further claimed that the traditional notion of matter had lost all
significance in modern thought and echoed the cry of a number of prominent physicists that matter, as science used to envision it, had "disappeared."

Lenin accused the empirio-criticists of confusing the issue and argued that they (along with a number of prominent physicists) had arrived at idealist conclusions from recent discoveries in science due only to their ignorance of the actual tenents of dialectical materialism. He further alleged that the empirio-criticists had failed to understand the distinction between "metaphysical" and dialectical materialism and that they had confused the Marxist conception of matter with that of Vogt, Büchner, and others. According to Lenin, the empirio-criticists had disputed the views of dialectical materialism on the basis of a profound misunderstanding of the doctrine.

Lenin asserted that the empirio-criticists would have been justified in their criticism of non-dialectical materialism had they conducted their inquiry from a dialectical materialist rather than from an idealist vantage point. Lenin pointed out, however, that the empirio-criticists had rejected dialectical materialism -- which they never understood -- on the basis of the shortcomings of pre-Marxian materialism, and that they had wrongly attributed those deficiencies to dialectical materialism. Lenin himself denounced pre-Marxian materialism as "metaphysical" on the grounds that it regarded matter as a static entity and neglected to take into account its dynamic character. Whereas metaphysical materialism expressed a belief in the "immutable essence" of matter and argued that there are fixed physical
boundaries in nature, dialectical materialism perceived matter as a category which encompasses the complex collection of constantly developing external realities which precede the mind and are reflected in it.

Matter is a philosophical category designating the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them (128).

Lenin held that dialectical materialism was consistent with the findings of modern physics and further claimed that this doctrine constituted the "only" authentic context for the interpretation of those findings. He argued that the discoveries cited by the empirio-criticists in their refutation of materialism actually served to prove what the dialectical materialists had been saying all along: matter is a dynamic mode of being which is infinitely complex and develops unceasingly and independently of our awareness of it. Lenin insisted that the discovery of sub-atomic particles had in no way invalidated the Marxian conception of matter, which he equated with the recognition of objective reality. In his view, the question of the ultimate composition of matter, while not unimportant, was irrelevant to the question as to whether or not matter exists.

Materialism and idealism differ in their respective answers to the question of the source of our knowledge and of the relation of knowledge (and of the "psychical" in general) to the physical world; while the question of the structure of matter, of atoms and electrons, is a
question that concerns only this physical world (266).

Lenin believed that the ultimate question of philosophy, put forward by Engels in Anti-Dühring and elsewhere, was that of the relation of thinking to being. In his view, no problem of philosophy could be addressed without considering the issue of primacy. Lenin charged that the empirio-criticists were attempting to reverse the Marxist stand on this crucial question by arguing that consciousness is prior to matter, rather than vice versa. Lenin regarded the primacy of matter as the central tenant of Marxist philosophy and he censured the empirio-criticists for rejecting this principle.

Lenin claimed that the Marxian conception of reality, which revolved around the recognition of the primacy of matter, contained within itself the most complete definition of matter necessary to correctly understand the relationship between material entities and the phenomenal world. He argued that the only characteristic of matter with which Marxian philosophy concerned itself was that of being an objective reality which exists prior to consciousness. The empirio-criticists, Lenin claimed, had rejected the primacy of matter (and thus the existence of matter independently of mind) and had therefore dismissed the existence of objective reality as a whole.

In Lenin's opinion, to acknowledge the existence of any objective reality was to admit the existence of matter and, conversely, to reject the existence of matter was tantamount to denying the existence of any objective reality. It may be said that Lenin regarded all idealist philosophy
(including empirio-criticism) as solipsism. Lenin rejected objective idealism as a gross contradiction in terms and vindicated that only an unrelenting materialist philosophy could offer a realistic view of the world and guard against the absurdity of solipsism.

Although Lenin denied that the Marxian conception of matter implied a belief in a substantive, physical substratum common to all material entities, many of his arguments implied such a belief (i.e. his assertion that thought cannot exist without brain). Whatever the case, Lenin's epistemological definition of matter gives rise to some interesting problems.

In essence, Lenin's epistemological materialism confers materiality upon a given entity by virtue of its relationship to a perceiving individual, who is also regarded as a material entity. In other words, material entities are defined as those things which are external to other material entities. Given Lenin's insistence that all things which exist are material, the distinction between the perceiving subject and the external object which is the basis for his definition of matter would appear to be little more than a false dichotomy between entities which are essentially identical, which may be precisely what the empirio-critics were suggesting with their philosophy.
Lenin's critique of metaphysical materialism centered around his contention that the classical materialists had wrongly regarded matter as an immutable constant which exists in a fixed state. Lenin rejected this view and argued that the recognition of the dynamic character of matter was essential to the Marxian conception of materialism and represented the only scientific view of the world. In contrast to this, he claimed, the empirio-critics and a number of contemporary physicists, particularly William Ostwald, had been led astray by their own ignorance of dialectical materialism and had fallen victim to an idealist interpretation of reality.

In his energeticist theory, Ostwald attempted to reduce the ultimate measure of reality to the sphere of energy rather than to that of either matter or consciousness. In Lenin's view, Ostwald's energeticist theory represented an attempt to divorce motion from matter and place it on the pinnacle of primacy. Such an attempt, he argued, actually served to throw the door wide open for idealism in physics, which Lenin regarded as an inherently materialist discipline.

Lenin insisted that neither matter nor motion could exist independently of the other, but rather formed a unitary whole. Lenin maintained that all motion is dependent on the existence of distinct material entities and contended that matter develops infinitely and is, therefore, in constant motion. For Lenin, the concept of primacy was not an issue in the question of the relationship of matter to motion due to the fact that he regarded these modes as being coexistent.
The metaphysical, i.e., anti-dialectical, materialist may accept the existence of matter without motion (even though temporarily, before "the first impulse," etc.). The dialectical materialist not only regards motion as an inseparable property of matter, but rejects the simplified view of motion and so forth. ... Whether we say the world is moving matter, or that it is material motion, makes no difference whatever (277-278).
The Thing-In-Itself

In the opinion of the empirio-critics, the concept of the thing-in-itself -- a Kantian notion -- had found expression in materialist philosophy largely through the work of George Plekhanov. Lenin dismissed this assertion and argued that the notion of things-in-themselves had been the subject of philosophical debate even before it was developed into a specific concept by Kant.

Lenin diagnosed the dispute concerning the validity of the thing-in-itself as an outward expression of the fundamental division of philosophy into two warring camps -- materialism and idealism. This assertion is typical of Lenin's customary approach to the problems of philosophy and represents one of the principal themes of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.

In his treatment of such issues as the thing-in-itself, Lenin evaluated the concept almost exclusively in terms of its role in the struggle between materialism and idealism rather than on its abstract merit. In order for a philosophical observation to gain favor in his thinking, it first had to conform to standard norms and patterns of interpretation within the Marxian tradition. The crucial issue for Lenin, as it had been for Engels, was whether materialism or idealism would dominate man's thought and guide his actions. In his view, no philosopher could remain impartial in this matter. Lenin advocated a strictly materialist approach and characterized any attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism -- or develop a third school of philosophy -- as a lapse into reactionary thinking.

In line with this, Lenin interpreted the struggle between
dialectical materialism and philosophical idealism as an
extension of the class struggle into the realm of consciousness. 
When viewed in this light, the dispute between the materialists
and the empirio-criticists becomes a struggle between the
progressive thinkers of the proletariat and the reactionary
spokesmen of the bourgeoisie. Although Lenin undoubtedly thought
along these lines, it should be noted that the empirio-critical
school was attempting to make progress in philosophy whereas
Lenin was anxious to uphold and corroborate the teachings of
Marx, Engels, and (to a lesser extent), Plekhanov as the last
word on the subject.

According to Lenin, the empirio-criticists had actually
introduced no new arguments in their refutation of the thing-in-itself but had rather plagiarized the work of various classical
idealist philosophers, especially Bishop George Berkeley. In
light of this, Lenin charged that empirio-criticism represented
not a forward leap in philosophy, but rather a step backward into
idealist and religious thinking. In his view, the empirio-criticists had chosen to ignore the "real" progress made in
philosophy by Marx and Engels and had, as a result, become
ensnared in the antiquated myths of classical idealism, as
represented in the philosophy of Mach and Avenerius.

The empirio-criticists, Lenin maintained, viewed the
thing-in-itself as a mysterious metaphysical construction which,
contrary to their conception of philosophical monism, served as
the basis of an epistemological dualism by dividing the world
into two separate spheres.

Lenin actually overreacted on this particular issue. The
empirio-criticists merely suggested that the concept of the
thing-in-itself represented a transgression of the bounds of experience. For them, the notion of things existing independently of perception implied that all human knowledge is inaccurate and incomplete as it is based on a distorted vision of a reality which is beyond the senses and therefore unknowable. Such a view, they argued, disrupted the unity of the world and rendered all human knowledge meaningless.

The empirio-critics also pointed out that no matter how intuitively satisfying it is to accept the notion of the preexistence of things-in-themselves after their discovery, this common sense assumption with respect to newly encountered realities actually constitutes an act of faith. To assume that a newly experienced entity existed prior to the experience requires one to confer a permanent identity upon something which can only be verified in its immediate manifestation to consciousness. In other words, the existence of a reality cannot be established prior to our conscious awareness of it. Lenin acknowledged this criticism, but did not attempt to refute it in his treatment of the thing-in-itself. It is interesting to note that the empirio-critics convincingly implicated the materialist school in the very crime with which Lenin so vehemently accused them; the crime of granting concessions to articles of faith in their philosophy.

In denying the existence of things-in-themselves, Lenin claimed, the empirio-critics had misunderstood the basic issue at hand: the irreconcilable struggle between materialism, which recognizes the existence of things outside the sphere of perception, and idealism, which bases its view of reality on the act of perception and admits the existence of nothing independently of it. According to Lenin, things-in-themselves
abound in the world and play a key role in the philosophy of dialectical materialism. Following Engels, Lenin described the thing-in-itself as an entity which is unknown rather than unknowable in a permanent sense. When a new element or property of matter is discovered, he argued, it is transformed in status from a thing-in-itself into a thing-for-us. The newly discovered element, having existed in the same manner prior to its discovery as after, serves as proof (in Lenin's view) that things-in-themselves exist and are comprehensible. The development of human knowledge is seen as a process through which things-in-themselves become things-for-us as a result of scientific investigation. Lenin stressed this point with reference to the dialectical mode of reasoning.

In the theory of knowledge, as in every other branch of science, we must think dialectically, that is, we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how knowledge emerges from ignorance, how insufficient, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact (99).

Lenin closed his argument with the assertion that the fundamental truth questioned by the empirio-criticists in their denial of the thing-in-itself was that of the immutable existence of objective reality. Dialectical materialism, he argued, recognizes the existence of things-in-themselves, things which exist outside of perception, as a basic pillar of its world view. He further alleged that the empirio-criticists, by rejecting this concept, had rendered their philosophy incompatible with the materialism of Marx, and had consequently strayed into the camp of idealism.
The Nature of Truth

The empirio-critics, particularly Alexander Bogdanov (a sometime Bolshevik), rejected the existence of absolute truths and argued that all truth must be viewed as a product of the historical epoch in which it arises. They viewed truth as a form of human understanding and maintained that, as such, all truth is subject to the limitations imposed upon human consciousness within a given historical period. In line with this, the empirio-critics denied that any truth could be valid for all time and argued that the category of eternal truth was incompatible with the dynamic nature of the Marxian world view.

The empirio-critics regarded collective experience as the most reliable criterion of truth and believed that all truths are actually derived from the observed correspondence of various individual perceptions of the world. For the empirio-critics, any truth represented a subjective interpretation of a reality undergoing constant change and was therefore relative under all circumstances. The empirio-critics believed that their interpretation of truth was consistent with the Marxian mode of reasoning and held that their conception of truth had remained faithful to the spirit, if not the letter, of classical Marxism.

Lenin responded to these claims by asserting that the empirio-criticist theory of truth was based on a profound misunderstanding of the dialectical method. He charged that empirio-criticism contradicted the teachings of Engels and that it represented a fundamental deviation from the Marxian tradition. Lenin further criticized the empirio-criticist theory of truth on the ground that it implied a denial of the objective
existence of the world and rendered all truth dependent on the mind, thus constituting an abandonment of objective criteria in the theory of knowledge.

Just as there exists an absolute external reality, Lenin contended, so there exist truths corresponding to that reality which are themselves absolute and immutable. Although man's ability to understand reality and ascertain truths from it is relative to historical circumstances, there are truths which accurately reflect the objective nature of reality and are therefore valid regardless of the disposition of consciousness. For Lenin, accurate knowledge of the world unfolds through a process in which past truths -- themselves developed within the confines of historically conditioned human understanding -- gradually approximate absolute, eternal truths as human knowledge progresses toward a more accurate understanding of the objective world with the advance of the sciences.

Human thought is then by its nature capable of giving, and does give, absolute truth, which is compounded of a sum total of relative truths. Each step in the development of science adds new grains to the sum of absolute truth, but the limits of the truth of each scientific proposition are relative, now expanding, now shrinking with the growth of knowledge (133-134).

Lenin charged that the empirio-criticists had treated the problem of truth in a purely speculative manner and had failed to substantiate their theory of truth by testing it in real life situations. Lenin regarded practice as the ultimate measure of truth and, in the manner of Anti-Dühring, he reasoned that the validity of a truth could be demonstrated only by showing that it
enabled man to effect changes in his environment. For Lenin, a theory which could not be demonstrated in practice was as futile as practice devoid of theoretical considerations.

In Lenin's thinking, Marxist philosophy represented a guide to action as well as a key to understanding the world. He held, as had Marx in his "Theses on Feuerbach," that the goal of philosophy was to change the world rather than merely to interpret it. Lenin regarded Marxist doctrine as the highest expression of truth and dismissed any other approach to the problems of philosophy as unjustified and unworkable. Lenin charged that the empirio-criticists, in their vain attempt to update classical Marxist philosophy with the teachings of Mach and Avenerius, had actually wrought considerable harm to the doctrine. By basing their theory of truth on subjective principles, he continued, the empirio-criticists had not only abandoned the objective truth of Marxism, but had also reduced their philosophy to the level of idle speculation and religious superstition.

According to Lenin, the empirio-criticist theory of truth implied that knowledge could be obtained through faith. Lenin criticized Bogdanov's conception of truth as a concession to superstitious thinking and argued that his definition of truth as a product of "collective experience" granted legitimacy to religious beliefs regardless of their objective validity, which he considered nill. Lenin charged that the empirio-criticist theory of truth undermined the uncompromising atheism of traditional Marxism by leaving loopholes for fideist and religious beliefs. Although the majority of the empirio-criticists (including Bogdanov) were avowed atheists, their
Time and Space

The empirio-criticists regarded space and time as subjective categories through which human beings seek to comprehend the world. They explained the conceptions of space and time as manifestations of human consciousness and argued that these notions contained no permanent significance outside the sphere of cognition. Space and time were, for the empirio-criticists, a framework of human understanding rather than an accurate portrayal of reality.

Lenin dismissed this view as an absurd idealist misconception of reality which contradicted the common sense interpretation of the world as well as the teachings of science (as he saw them). In his opinion, the empirio-criticists had placed undue emphasis on the principle of relativism in their theory of knowledge and had failed to understand the distinction between permanently existing objective realities and the subjective measure of those realities through which human beings may gradually increase their knowledge of the world. According to Lenin, the recognition of space and time as immutable conditions of being -- rather than as relative forms of understanding -- is critical to the materialist theory of knowledge and represents the only authentic view of reality.

Recognising (sic) the existence of objective reality, i.e., matter in motion independently of our mind (sic), materialism must also inevitably recognise (sic) the objective reality of time and space... Just as things or bodies are not mere phenomena, not complexes of sensations, but objectively real forms of being. There is
nothing in the world but matter in motion, and matter in motion cannot move otherwise than in space and time (176-177).
Hieroglyph Versus Reflection Theory

Throughout *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin defended George Plekhanov's interpretation of materialist philosophy (which he considered very close to his own) from the attacks of the empirio-criticists. This may be partly due to the fact that Lenin began his study of Marxism as a student of Plekhanov. Despite Lenin's admiration for Plekhanov, and despite the similarity of their philosophies, he was quick to point out significant doctrinal differences which existed between them.

Lenin complained that Plekhanov dealt with the challengers of Marxism on a purely theoretical level while ignoring the idealist origins and practical consequences of such revisionist tendencies as empirio-criticism. In contrast to this approach, Lenin attacked empirio-criticism not only for its theoretical, but also for its class content. In addition, Lenin differed with Plekhanov in his understanding of perception and strongly objected to his "hieroglyph" theory of perception, which conflicted with his own.

Plekhanov contended that sensation represents a charicature, or hieroglyph, of external reality and that one's impression of the world is actually a symbol -- much like a shadow -- of the reality which produces it rather than its exact copy. According to Lenin this postulate implied, in the spirit of epistemological agnosticism, that one can never comprehend the true nature of reality. For Lenin, such a postulate entailed that human knowledge can never discern the objective validity of any observation of the world and is,
therefore, inherently distorted and misleading.

In contrast to Plekhanov, Lenin regarded sensation as a mental "photograph" which conveys an accurate picture of external reality. In his opinion, the act of perception involves a copying process by which external reality is reflected in the human mind through the medium of sensation. According to Lenin, the copy theory of perception safeguarded materialist philosophy from agnostic conclusions and represented the only accurate interpretation of the views of Marx and Engels.
Empirio-Criticism and Solipsism

The empirio-critics regarded their system of thought as a revolutionary synthesis of materialism and idealism which provided a more balanced interpretation of the world than had previous philosophies of either idealist or materialist persuasion. The empirio-critics believed that their approach to the problems of philosophy was unique and unprecedented and argued that their philosophy had transcended the traditional one-sided view of reality expounded by classical thinkers. Lenin rejected this view and charged that empirio-criticism was still based primarily on idealist premises which, when extended to their logical conclusions, produced a solipsist world view.

By basing their view of reality on sensation, Lenin claimed, the empirio-critics had relinquished the only scientific (or, more precisely, materialist) approach to the problems of philosophy and had succumbed to the pitfalls of subjective idealism, particularly solipsism. According to Lenin, if the empirio-criticist interpretation of external realities were consistently applied to all experienced realities, then all people other than the self would be reduced to the status of sensations subordinate to the cognitive processes of a single subject. If all the objects of perception are in fact composed of sensation, he continued, then the existence of multiple subjects could not be confirmed. In Lenin's opinion, empirio-criticism offered no means by which to substantiate the existence of anyone other than the philosophizing individual. Implicit in the empirio-
criticist view of reality, he charged, was the solipsist postulate that the entire world is one's own sensation.

Clearly, Lenin considered the emphasis of the empirio-critics on the subjective measure of reality a concession to solipsism in their theory of knowledge. Although Lenin dismissed solipsism as an absurd notion, he conceded that when applied consistently the doctrine contained a great deal of validity. For example, if sensation is identified as the ultimate source of all human knowledge, it follows that one's view of the world is a private reality based solely on individual perception. Consequently, a reality exists only when it is directly experienced. In short, every person who has one for another is another for one, and no one may experience another as subject or encounter himself as object. Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, Lenin strongly objected to the empirio-criticist explanation of reality, which he regarded as a confused rehash of subjective idealism.

The empirio-critics, Lenin contended, had denied the existence of external material realities and had elevated sensation to the role of primacy in their system of thought. In so doing, he continued, they had also rejected the existence of the brain independently of sensation, thereby implying the existence of thought without brain and expressing a view of reality virtually identical to that of subjective idealism.

Lenin's attempt to equate empirio-criticism with solipsism actually involved a willful distortion of the empirio-critics' views on his part. The empirio-critics had, in fact, allowed for the existence of the brain and
nervous system and had explicitly rejected the solipsist outlook in their philosophy. Although Lenin acknowledged that the empirio-criticists had actually incorporated some materialist postulates into their system, he argued that they had done so in contradiction to their own basic assumptions about the nature of the world. In his opinion, the materialist aspects of empirio-criticism were irrelevant to the underlying essence of this philosophy and those few materialist premises in no way altered the idealist nature of the system as a whole.

Lenin's analysis of empirio-criticism as latent solipsism was founded on his evaluation of this philosophy in terms of what he believed to be its implicit meaning. As a result, Lenin's interpretation of empirio-criticism was essentially a solipsist one and did not correspond with the pronouncements of the empirio-criticists themselves.
Anatoly Lunacharsky, although not himself an empirio-criticist, collaborated with many prominent theorists of this school in the publication of a collective philosophical work entitled Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism. Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was actually written as a refutation of this work. Lunacharsky's involvement with the empirio-criticists stemmed more from a common search for a new approach to the study of Marxist philosophy rather than from a shared philosophical consensus. Lenin noted that in the introduction to Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism Lunacharsky had expressed the spirit of this approach in stating: "Perhaps we have gone astray, but we are seeking." Lenin scoffed at this sentiment and charged that the "seekers" were merely wandering aimlessly in a mire of antiquated bourgeois philosophies.

Lenin regarded Lunacharsky as one of the most dangerous Bolshevik heretics due to his efforts to supplement Marxist doctrine with a spiritual emphasis involving a religion of humanity. Lunacharsky hoped to establish an "atheistic religion" which would hold the "higher human potentialities" (or the "Higher Self") as the object of worship. Lenin rejected Lunacharsky's "god-building" philosophy as merely a misguided attempt to replace traditional religious superstitions with another. In his view, Lunacharsky's theories were diametrically opposed to the entire materialist tradition and were completely alien to the Marxian heritage. In line with this, Lenin claimed that
Lunacharsky's philosophy represented an abrupt deviation from the work of Marx, Engels, and Feuerbach, whom Lenin considered to be the greatest of the pre-Marxian materialists.

Lenin was actually mistaken on this point. Lunacharsky's attempt to incorporate spiritual values into materialist philosophy was not unprecedented, but was actually quite similar to Feuerbach's attempt to rid humanity of its "religious alienation" by establishing man as deity. Although Feuerbach did not actually advocate the organized worship of humanity, both he and Lunacharsky sought to establish a religion of humanity which would reject the existence of any supernatural being as an affront to the dignity of man.

While Lenin clearly regarded Lunacharsky as the greatest threat to the uncompromising atheism of Marxist doctrine, he viewed the entire empirio-criticist approach to philosophy as quasi-religious and frequently denounced the empirio-criticists as "Scholastics." By way of historical allusion, Lenin implied that the empirio-criticists were following in the footsteps of St. Thomas Aquinas, who sought to create a "grand synthesis" of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy in an effort to provide a rational foundation for the Christian faith. The precise meaning of this accusation is somewhat ambiguous, although there are a number of possible interpretations.

Lenin probably recognized the distinction that whereas Aquinas had sought to strengthen a religious doctrine by setting it upon a rational foundation, the empirio-criticists had (in his view) actually set out to weaken Marxist doctrine by introducing articles of faith into a sound and "scientific" body
of thought. An alternate explanation which, in light of Lenin's disposition, is probably more plausible, is that he believed that empirio-criticism represented an attempt on the part of bourgeois philosophical and theological authorities to grant legitimacy to their doomed beliefs by cloaking them in the garb of Marxism, while at the same time weakening the genuine article. In effect, Lenin may have been suggesting that the class enemy had come to understand the bankruptcy of its belief systems and had been forced to tacitly recognize this by allying itself with the very philosophy which guaranteed its ultimate downfall, but only in order to corrupt it and thereby stem the tide of history. While this hypothesis clearly involves some conjecture, Lenin certainly viewed empirio-criticism not only as an aberration, but also as a conspiracy, although the extent of this belief is difficult to gauge since it is never fully developed in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.

Of course, on a more superficial level Lenin's identification of empirio-criticism with Scholasticism may represent a procedural as opposed to an ideological criticism. Like Aquinas, the empirio-critics attempted to effect a "grand synthesis" which would result in the creation of a body of knowledge of almost universal scope and significance. Lenin resented these efforts and objected to the eclecticism of his philosophical opponents. Whatever the case, Lenin certainly regarded religious beliefs and practices as anathema to Marxist doctrine and vigorously sought to eliminate them even before they had gained any significant following in the party.
Economic Determinism Versus Biological Mysticism

The empirio-criticists sought to reinforce Marx's interpretation of history with a discussion of sociological and biological factors which they believed helped to explain the nature of society as well as the origins and implications of social change. The empirio-criticists attempted to describe the underlying social energetics and biological aspects of social development within a Marxist framework. In making such attempts, it may be said that the empirio-criticists treated Marxian doctrine more as a social theory in the making than as established dogma. Indeed, the empirio-criticists made an effort to enrich the Marxian view of historical development with elaborate sociological and biological concepts which were absent in classical Marxism.

Lenin conceded that the empirio-criticists had acted with good intentions in trying to extend the legitimacy of historical materialism, but he complained that they had ignored the primacy of economic conditions -- the core concept of Marx's historical teachings -- and had consequently failed to appreciate the true significance of Marx's contribution to the understanding of historical change. Lenin clearly regarded concrete economic analysis as the cornerstone of the marxist approach to the study of social development and he chided the empirio-criticists for abandoning this legacy in favor of an approach which contained "not a grain of Marxism (338)."

There is not a shadow of concrete economic enquiry (sic) here, not a hint of the Marxian method, the method of dialectics and the world outlook of
materialism, only a mere invention of definitions and attempts to fit them into the ready-made conclusions of Marxism (339).

Besides the issue of orthodoxy, Lenin may have had other reasons to oppose the attempts of the empirio-criticists to provide Marxian doctrine with sociological and biological dimensions. The basic issue at hand in this controversy may have been the weakening of the traditional Marxist doctrine of economic determinism.

In the main, Marxist theory rests on the assumption that all social phenomena are determined by immutable laws of historical development which are rooted in underlying economic realities. It is claimed that economic factors constitute the only source of significant historical change and are responsible for the whole of human development from primitive times to the present. The empirio-criticists sought to expand upon this traditional formulation of historical materialism by identifying other aspects of historical change rooted in biological factors and social energetics. In their view, such an approach to the Marxist interpretation of history provided a greater depth to the doctrine and offered a more complete treatment of the lessons of history than was to be found in the works of the classical theorists.

From Lenin’s perspective, such a contention may have seemed ominous in that the empirio-criticists were suggesting that economic progress is not the sole historical determinant. He may have felt that the empirio-criticists were working to the detriment of Marx’s economic model while at the same time complicating the system beyond usefulness with their
biological and sociological theories of historical change. Lenin may have feared that if such suggestions came to be taken seriously, the economic trigger of historical progress would be obscured and the primary source of social advance would be reduced to the status of a contributing factor.
The empirio-criticist Alexander Bogdanov questioned the traditional Marxist stance concerning the primacy of social being over social consciousness and contended that these forms of social existence were actually identical to each other. Bogdanov reasoned that in order for human beings to establish a social order in which they may become social beings, it was first necessary for them to consciously interact with each other so that they could jointly establish some sort of community. Social being, he argued, could not exist prior to social consciousness due to the fact that neither social being nor social consciousness could exist independently of the other. In fact, it may be said that Bogdanov regarded these concepts as little more than different aspects of a single phenomenon.

Lenin dismissed Bogdanov’s identity theory as an idealist misconception which was not only alien to -- and incompatible with -- Marxism, but was also clearly untenable in light of ordinary observations. Lenin accused Bogdanov of placing an exaggerated emphasis on the world of the mind in his empirio-monist philosophy and claimed that he had underestimated the necessary role of material prerequisites in the formation of social consciousness.

According to Lenin, the assertion that being determines consciousness is the *sina qua non* of all materialist philosophy and especially of historical materialism. In denying this maxim, Bogdanov had undermined the materialist foundations of the Marxist approach to social
consciousness. Lenin acknowledged that Bogdanov had intended to corroborate the validity of historical materialism in his inquiry, but argued that Bogdanov's approach was unjustified by the tenets of true Marxism and that his conclusions unwittingly served the class enemy.

Materialism in general recognizes (sic) objectively the real being (matter) as independent of the consciousness, sensation, experience, etc., of humanity. Historical materialism recognizes (sic) social being as independent of the social consciousness of humanity. In both cases consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best an approximately true (adequate, perfectly exact) reflection of it. From this Marxian philosophy, which is cast from a single piece of steel, you cannot eliminate one basic premise, one essential part, without departing from objective truth, without falling prey to a bourgeois-reactionary falsehood (337-338).

Lenin acknowledged that on the whole Bogdanov accepted Marx's interpretation of history, but charged that at the same time he had ignored several of the crucial underpinnings of Marxian theory and had attempted to replace them with idealist notions. Lenin characterized Bogdanov's social philosophy as materialist above and idealist below. He criticized Bogdanov's efforts to prove the correctness of historical materialism with "idealist" postulates as a futile and misguided attempt to improve upon a doctrine which was in no need of revision. Finally, Lenin objected to Bogdanov's
identity theory, which he saw as an unpardonable break with orthodox Marxism.

Lenin regarded social consciousness as a phenomenon completely rooted in, and determined by, the underlying material, that is, economic, foundations of society. In his opinion, social consciousness consisted of an accurate, although often incomplete, reflection of social being in the human mind. Lenin argued that although the conscious interaction of people was a necessary precondition of all social organization, this did not mean that social consciousness and social existence are identical. He maintained that human behavior is strongly influenced by objective economic laws which exist independently of man's knowledge of them. Although human behavior is ultimately determined by the complex web of economic interrelationships which forms the basis of society and constitutes social existence, the individual is usually unaware of the economic factors which determine his actions and of the possible aggregate effects of economic behaviors on the nature of social being.

Lenin admitted that, due to its complexity, the total economic activity of any society had largely been beyond the grasp of human knowledge in past ages, but he argued that this was no longer the case since Marx and Engels had discovered the principal economic laws which govern historical change. Furthermore, he proclaimed that through Marxism mankind had acquired the capacity to effect desirable changes in the human condition. According to Lenin, the primary goal of mankind (greatly facilitated by the work of Marx and Engels) is to
comprehend the moving principles of historical change so that man may adapt his social consciousness to those laws and become the maker of history.

The fact that you live and conduct your business, beget children, produce products and exchange them, gives rise to an objectively necessary chain of events, a chain of development, which is independent of your social consciousness, and is never grasped by the latter completely. The highest task of humanity is to comprehend the objective logic of economic evolution (the evolution of social life) in its general and fundamental features, so that it may be possible to adapt to it one's social consciousness and the consciousness of the advanced classes of all capitalist countries in as definite, clear, and critical a fashion as possible (337).

Historical materialism has, of course, been subjected to a number of criticisms since it was first formulated by Marx. For instance, it has been argued that the economic foundation of society, which occupies a place of primacy in Marx's social theory, is actually a system of subjective categories which includes, besides the mode and relations of production, such preconditions of the means and forces of production as education, culture, technology, and politics -- phenomena which, according to Marxist theory, are determined by economic circumstances.

The main thesis of historical materialism is its assertion that all social change results from changes in the economic substructure of society. Critics point out that even if
this interpretation is valid, the question of the ultimate cause of historical change -- the trigger of the trigger -- is still left unanswered. A similar criticism centers around the contention that science and technology -- both superstructural phenomena -- may initiate change in the substructure, challenging the notion of economic primacy.

An additional problem with the Marxist interpretation of history arises in connection with the assumption that an understanding of economic causations will provide all that is needed to accurately predict and eventually manipulate historical development. Even if it were conceded that the primary causes of historical change are economic, it does not follow that an understanding of these factors would guarantee knowledge of the future course of historical development (or control of that development) any more than an understanding of the causes of foul weather would enable man to eradicate tornadoes.

Perhaps the most significant criticism of historical materialism stems from the fact that this theory is hard pressed to explain its relationship to reality within its own framework. If social consciousness is in fact under all circumstances merely a semi-accurate reflection of social being, then it stands to reason that a socialist consciousness could not have arisen within a society dominated by the capitalist mode of production. It may be said that in formulating his theory of historical materialism, Marx simultaneously transcended the bounds of this system and set himself at odds with his own interpretation of history.
Kantianism: Left and Right Criticism

Both Lenin and the empirio-criticists regarded Kantianism as an inconsistent and contradictory system of thought whose validity was open to question. Lenin acknowledged that both the materialists and the empirio-criticists disputed the validity of Kantian philosophy, but he argued that they did so on opposite grounds, from hostile orientations, and for cross purposes. He claimed that whereas the materialists criticized Kant from the left, the empirio-criticists sided with the idealists and criticized him from the right.

In Lenin's view, Kant's philosophy represented an attempt to consolidate idealist and materialist postulates within a single body of thought and was, as a result, neither strictly materialist or idealist in nature. Accordingly, he argued, Kantianism had been subjected to criticisms and revisions from both the idealists (whom he characterized as philosophers of the right) and the materialists (whom he characterized as philosophers of the left).

The principal feature of Kant's philosophy is the reconciliation of materialism with idealism, a compromise between the two, the combination within one system of heterogeneous and contrary philosophical trends. When Kant assumes that something outside us, a thing-in-itself, corresponds to our ideas, he is a materialist. When he declares the thing-in-itself to be unknowable, transcendental, other-sided, he is an idealist. The materialists blamed Kant for his idealism, rejected the idealist features of his system, demonstrated the
knowability, the this-sidedness of the thing-in-itself, [and] the absence of a fundamental difference between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon... The agnostics and idealists blamed Kant for his assumption of the thing-in-itself as a concession to materialism, "realism," or "naive realism (200)."

In Lenin's opinion, the empirio-critics had rejected the materialist aspects of Kantianism and had embraced and embellished its idealist postulates in their philosophy. In line with this, he charged that the empirio-critics had addressed the shortcomings of Kantianism in an idealist manner and had repudiated the only progressive (that is, materialist) aspects of Kant's philosophy. Consequently, he argued, empirio-criticism represented a return to outmoded idealist and agnostic thinking which stood in sharp contrast to the development of materialist philosophy.

Thus the entire school of Feuerbach, Marx and Engels turned from Kant to the left, to a complete rejection of all idealism and of all agnosticism. But our Machians followed the reactionary trend in philosophy, Mach and Avenerius, who criticized Kant from the standpoint of Hume and Berkeley (207).

Lenin opposed the empirio-critics not only because he deemed their teachings reactionary, but more importantly because he resented that they had (quite successfully) carried out what he considered a blatant heresy under the banner of Marxism. In Lenin's view, the empirio-critics constituted a clear threat to the integrity and inviolability of classical Marxist philosophy due to the fact that their revisionist activities were
conducted under the guise of further developing the Marxian system of thought. He also charged that the empirio-critics sought to obscure their idealist dispositions with the use of "new" and confusing terminologies. For Lenin, not only was empirio-criticism a wolf in sheep's clothing; it was also a cancer eating away at the heart of Marxism which had to be eradicated in the interest of human progress. Lenin criticized the Marxist -- particularly the Bolshevik -- empirio-critics far more harshly and thoroughly than the non-Marxist ones because in his thinking the outspoken enemy was a lesser threat than the deviating friend.

Of course, it is the sacred right of every citizen, and particularly of every intellectual, to follow any ideological reactionary he likes. But when people who have radically severed relations with the very foundations of Marxism in philosophy begin to dodge, confuse matters, hedge, and assure us that they "too" are Marxists in philosophy, that they are "almost" in agreement with Marx, and have only slightly "supplemented" him -- the spectacle is a far from pleasant one (207).
Parties in Philosophy

The empirio-criticists claimed that they had transcended the bounds of classical thinking in their work and contended that their system offered a method of explaining natural and social processes which was untainted by either materialist or idealist dogmas. Lenin rejected these claims and argued that the empirio-criticists' futile attempt to steer a neutral course in philosophy had only led them to confusion and uncertainty. He charged that the empirio-criticists had failed to properly understand their role as Marxists in the struggle between materialism and idealism and had consequently landed themselves in the idealist camp.

According to Lenin, a philosopher could neither take a neutral stance on the issue of primacy nor declare his work to be above the struggle between materialism and idealism due to the fact that all philosophy is actually a framework for this dispute and is therefore inseparable from it. Lenin censured the empirio-criticists for suggesting that the issue of primacy -- which, he claimed, had been at the center of philosophical debate for thousands of years -- had been rendered "obsolete" by modern philosophy. Furthermore, he characterized the empirio-criticists' claim of non-partisanship in philosophy as a betrayal of the Marxian legacy. In his view, the empirio-criticists had abandoned the Marxist approach in their effort to combine two hostile philosophies into a single system of thought. In short, Lenin charged that the empirio-criticists had forsaken partisanship for a bland consensus.

According to Lenin, the true significance of Marx's work
had been lost on the empirio-criticists, who wrongly looked to contemporary academic philosophy for answers to philosophical problems which had, in his opinion, already been solved for all time in the works of Marx and Engels. What the empirio-criticists and the philosophical scholars described as "narrowness" or "one-sidedness" in Marx's uncompromising materialism was actually evidence of his understanding of the partisan nature of philosophy. In order for Marxism to be true to itself, Lenin claimed, it must be thoroughly partisan. Marx, he continued, had recognized this and had always sought to advance materialist philosophy while defending it against the challenges of idealism, agnosticism, and various other lesser systems.

The genius of Marx and Engels consisted in the very fact that in the course of a long period, nearly half a century, they developed materialism, that they further advanced one fundamental trend in philosophy, that they did not confine themselves to reiterating epistemological problems that had already been solved, but consistently applied, and showed how to apply -- this same materialism in the sphere of the social sciences, mercilessly brushing aside as litter and rubish the pretentious rigmarole, the innumerable attempts to "discover" a "new" line in philosophy, to invent a "new" trend and so forth (348-349).

Lenin's remarks in this matter are illuminating in that they reveal his tendency to closely identify himself with Marx and Engels so as to present himself as their most ardent disciple and, perhaps, their most qualified successor. Whether Lenin cloaked himself in the garb of orthodoxy in a calculated effort
to establish himself as an authority or out of genuine devotion to the ideology is an open question, but it may be said that the passion and conviction of Lenin's writings suggests a degree of earnestness which surpasses the requirements of political pragmatism. In short, one gets the impression upon reading Lenin that he was indeed a true believer. In any case, Lenin insisted that in condemning the empirio-critics, he was following in the footsteps of Marx and Engels.

Marx and Engels were partisans in philosophy from start to finish; they were able to detect the deviations from materialism and the concessions to idealism and fideism in each and every "new" tendency (352).

Lenin censured the empirio-critics for drawing on "bourgeois" philosophies in their effort to develop Marxism. In his opinion, the empirio-critics had naively placed their trust in the work of academic philosophers, whom he described as agents of the ruling class. Apparently, Lenin viewed the philosophy of Mach and Avenerius as a clever trap with which the ruling class had hoped to obscure the central issues of philosophy. The empirio-critics, he alleged, had fallen victim to a grand deception and had become the pawns of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against materialism.

For Lenin, philosophy was not a mere exercise in contemplation, nor was it the exclusive domain of intellectual elites; it was yet another arena in which the life and death struggle between the working class and its capitalist oppressors was being waged. For Lenin, the conquest of philosophy was as important to the success of the communist revolution as was the expropriation of the means of production. Indeed, Lenin was
shrewd to recognize that in order for a revolution to succeed, it must capture not only the property and power structure of its enemies, but also the hearts and minds of its subjects. When viewed in this light, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism may be seen as an important facet of Lenin's ultimate drive to power.
Works Cited