

ALAIN BADIOU _ THEORY OF CONTRADICTION – 1975

Chapter 1

An Essential Philosophical Thesis: "It Is Right to Rebel against the Reactionaries"

(Translated by Alberto Toscano)

We are familiar with Mao Zedong's formula: "Marxism comprises many principles, but in the final analysis they can all be brought back to a single sentence: it is right to rebel against the reactionaries." This phrase, which appears so simple, is at the same time rather mysterious: how is it conceivable that Marx's enormous theoretical enterprise, with its ceaselessly and scrupulously reworked and recast analyses, can be concentrated in a single maxim: "It is right to rebel against the reactionaries"? And what is this maxim? Are we dealing with an observation, summarizing the Marxist analysis of objective contradictions, the ineluctable confrontation of revolution and counterrevolution? Is it a directive oriented toward the subjective mobilization of revolutionary forces? Is Marxist truth the following: one rebels, one is right? Or is it rather: one must rebel? The two, perhaps, and even more the spiraling movement from the one to the other, real rebellion (objective force) being enriched and returning on itself in the consciousness of its rightness or reason (subjective force).

A. Practice, Theory, Knowledge

We are already handed something essential here: every Marxist statement is—in a single, dividing movement—observation and directive. As a concentrate of real practice, it equals its movement in order to return to it. Since all that is draws its being only from its becoming, equally, theory as knowledge of what is has being only by moving toward that of which it is the theory. Every knowledge is orientation, every description is prescription.

The sentence, "it is right to rebel against the reactionaries," bears witness to this more than any other. In it we find expressed the fact that Marxism, prior to being the full-fledged science of social formation, is the distillate of what rebellion demands: that one consider it right, that reason be rendered to it. Marxism is both a taking sides and the systematization of a partisan experience. The existence of a science of social formations bears no interest for the masses unless it reflects and concentrates their real revolutionary movement. Marxism must be conceived as the accumulated wisdom of popular revolutions, the reason they engender, the fixation and detailing of their target. Mao Zedong's sentence clearly situates rebellion as the originary place of correct ideas, and reactionaries as those whose destruction is legitimated by theory. Mao's sentence situates Marxist truth within the unity of theory and practice. Marxist truth is that from which rebellion draws its rightness, its reason, to demolish the enemy. It repudiates any equality in the face of truth. In a single movement, which is knowledge in its specific division into description and directive, it judges, pronounces the sentence, and immerses itself in its execution. Rebels possess knowledge, according to their aforementioned essential movement, their power and their duty: to annihilate the reactionaries. Marx's Capital does not say anything different: the proletarians are right to violently overthrow the capitalists. Marxist truth is not a conciliatory truth. It is, in and of itself, dictatorship and, if need be, terror.

Mao Zedong's sentence reminds us that, for a Marxist, the link from theory to practice (from reason to rebellion) is an internal condition of theory itself, because truth is a real process, it is rebellion against the reactionaries. There is hardly a truer and more profound statement in

Hegel than the following: "The absolute Idea has turned out to be the identity of the theoretical Idea and the practical Idea. Each of these by itself is still one-sided" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*). For Hegel, absolute truth is the contradictory unity of theory and practice. It is the uninterrupted and divided process of being and the act. Lenin salutes this enthusiastically: "The unity of the theoretical idea (of knowledge) and of practice—this NB—and this unity precisely in the theory of knowledge, for the resulting sum is the "absolute idea" (Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*). Let us read this sentence very carefully, since, remarkably, it divides the word "knowledge" into two. That is a crucial point, on which we shall often return: knowledge, as theory, is (dialectically) opposed to practice. Theory and practice form a unity, that is to say, for the dialectic, a unity of opposites. But this knowledge (theory/)practice contradiction is in turn the very object of the theory of knowledge. In other words, the inner nature of the process of knowledge is constituted by the theory/practice contradiction. Or again, practice, which as such is dialectically opposed to knowledge (to theory), is nevertheless an integral part of knowledge qua process.

In all Marxist texts we encounter this scission, this double occurrence of the word "knowledge," designating either theory in its dialectical correlation to practice or the overall process of this dialectic, that is, the contradictory movement of these two terms, theory and practice. Consider Mao, *"Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?"*: "Often, correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process . . . leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge" (Mao Zedong, *Five Philosophical Essays*). The movement of knowledge is the practice-knowledge-practice trajectory. Here "knowledge" designates one of the terms in the process but equally the process taken as a whole, a process that in turn includes two occurrences of practice, initial and final. To stabilize our vocabulary,² and remain within the tradition, we will call "theory" the term in the theory/practice contradiction whose overall movement will be the process of "knowledge." We will say: Knowledge is the dialectical process practice/theory.

On this basis we may expose the reactionary illusion entertained by those who imagine they can circumvent the strategic thesis of the primacy of practice. It is clear that whoever is not within the real revolutionary movement, whoever is not practically internal to the rebellion against the reactionaries, knows nothing, even if he theorizes.

Mao Zedong did indeed affirm that in the theory/practice contradiction—that is, in a phase of the real process—theory could temporarily play the main role: "The creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, 'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement'" (Mao, *On Contradiction*). Does this mean that, at that moment, theory amounts to an intrinsic revolutionary possibility, that pure "Marxist theoreticians" can and must emerge? Absolutely not. It means that, in the theory/practice contradiction that constitutes the process of knowledge, theory is the principal aspect of the contradiction; that the systematization of practical revolutionary experiences is what allows one to advance; that it is useless to continue quantitatively to accumulate these experiences, to repeat them, because what is on the agenda is the qualitative leap, the rational synthesis immediately followed by its application, that is, its verification. But without these experiences, without organized practice (because organization alone allows the centralization of experiences), there is no systematization, no knowledge at all. Without a generalized application there is no testing ground, no verification, no truth. In that case "theory" can only give birth to idealist absurdities.

We thus come back to our starting point: practice is internal to the rational movement of truth.

In its opposition to theory, it is part of knowledge. It is this intuition that accounts for Lenin's enthusiastic reception of the Hegelian conception of the absolute Idea, to the point that he makes Marx into the mere continuation of Hegel. ("Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge," Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*.) Mao Zedong's sentence lends its precision to Lenin's enthusiasm. It is the general historical content of Hegel's dialectical statement. It is not just any practice that internally anchors theory, it is the rebellion against the reactionaries. Theory, in turn, does not externally legislate on practice, on rebellion: it incorporates itself in the rebellion by the mediating release of its reason. In this sense, it is true that the sentence says it all, an all that summarizes Marxism's class position, its concrete revolutionary significance. An all outside which stands anyone who tries to consider Marxism not from the standpoint of rebellion but from that of the break; not from the standpoint of history but from that of the system; not from the standpoint of the primacy of practice but from that of the primacy of theory; not as the concentrated form of the wisdom of the working people but as its a priori condition.

B. The Three Senses of the Word "Reason"

If this sentence says it all, it nevertheless does so according to the dialectic, that is, according to a simplicity that divides itself. What concentrates and sustains this division, while apparently cloaking it, is the word "reason" or "rightness": one is right, the rebellion is right, a new reason stands up against the reactionaries. The fact is that, through the word "reason," the sentence says three things, and it is the articulation of the three that makes the whole.

1. It is right to rebel against the reactionaries does not mean in the first place "one must rebel against the reactionaries" but rather "one rebels against the reactionaries"—it is a fact, and this fact is reason. The sentence says: primacy of practice. Rebellion does not wait for its reason, rebellion is what is always already there, for any possible reason whatever. Marxism simply says: rebellion is reason, rebellion is subject. Marxism is the recapitulation of the wisdom of rebellion. Why write *Capital*, hundreds of pages of scruples and minutiae, of laborious intelligence, volumes of dialectic often at the edges of intelligibility? Because only this measures up to the profound wisdom of rebellion.

The historical density and obstinacy of rebellion precede Marxism, accumulating the conditions and necessity of its appearance, because they instill the conviction that, beyond the particular causes that provoke the proletarian uprising, there exists a profound reason, which cannot be uprooted. Marx's *Capital* is the systematization, in terms of general reason, of what is given in the historical summation of causes. The bourgeoisie, which cognizes and recognizes class struggle, is happy to admit and investigate the particular causes of a rebellion, if only in order to forestall its return. But it ignores the reason, which when all is said and done the proletarians hold onto—a reason that no absorption of causes and circumstances would ever satisfy. Marx's enterprise amounts to reflecting what is given, not so much in the particularity of battles but in the persistence and development of the class energy invested in them. The thinking of causes does not suffice here.³ The reason for this persistence must be accounted for in depth. The essence of the proletarian position does not reside in the episodes of class struggle but in the historical project that subtends them, a project whose form of practical existence is given by the implacable duration and successive stages of proletarian obstinacy. That is where reason lies. Only its clarification and exposition—simultaneously in the guise of reflections and directives—do justice to the movement, which rebellion brings to light, of the class being of phenomena.

Today only the Maoist enterprise integrally develops what proletarians do and allow us to know through the unconditional and permanent character of their rebellion. Only thus can we

say: yes, contradiction is antagonistic, yes, the workers' rebellion, which is the fire at the heart of this contradiction, is the very reason of history. "It is right to rebel against the reactionaries" means above all: the obstinate proletarians are right, they have all the reasons on their side, and much more besides.

2. "It is right to rebel against the reactionaries" also means: the rebellion will be right, it will have reason on its side. At the tribunal of history, the reactionaries will have to provide reasons, to account for all their misdeeds of exploitation and oppression. The obstinacy of proletarian rebellion is certainly—and this is the first meaning of the word "reason," or "rightness"—the objective, irreducible character of the contradiction that pits the workers against the bourgeois, but it is also the practical certainty of the final victory; it is the spontaneous, ceaselessly renewed critique of worker defeatism. That the state of affairs is unacceptable and divided—this is the first reason for the rebellion against the reactionaries. That it is transitory and doomed is the second. It is reason, no longer from the standpoint of the motivation or of the moment, but from the standpoint of the future. It is reason in the sense of victory, beyond reason in the sense of legitimacy. Rebellion is wisdom because it is just, because it is founded in reason, but also because it is rebellion that legislates about the future. Marxism repudiates any conception of reason solely based on justification. The proletariat does not simply have true reasons to rebel, it has victorious reasons. "Reason" is here at the crossroads of revolutionary legitimacy and revolutionary optimism.

Rebellion is allergic to Kant's moral maxim: "You must, therefore you can." Besides, Kant concluded that an act thus regulated in terms of pure duty had doubtless never taken place. Morality is a defeated prescription. But the workers' rebellion has indeed taken place, and it finds in Marxism its place of victorious prescription. Marxist reason is not an ought, a duty to be, it is the affirmation of being itself, the unlimited power of what stands up, opposes, contradicts. It is the objective victory of popular refusal. Materialistically, workers' reason says: "You can, therefore you must."

3. But "reason" means yet another thing, and this thing is the split fusion of the first two senses. This time, "it is right to rebel against the reactionaries" means: rebellion can be strengthened by the consciousness of its own reason. The statement itself "it is right to rebel against the reactionaries" is both the development of kernels of knowledge internal to the rebellion itself and the return into rebellion of this development. Rebellion—which is right, which has reason—finds in Marxism the means of developing this reason, of assuring its victorious reason. That which allows the legitimacy of rebellion (the first sense of the word "reason") to become articulated with its victory (the second sense of the word "reason") is a new type of fusion between rebellion as a practice that is always there and the developed form of its reason. The fusion of Marxism and of the real workers' movement is the third sense of the word reason, that is to say, the dialectical link, both objective and subjective, of its first two senses.

We encounter here once again the dialectical status of Marxist statements, all of which are divided according to reflection and according to the directive: grasping, beyond its causes, the reason of class energy. By the same token the theory formulates the rule whereby reason can prevail over the cause, the ensemble over the local, strategy over tactics. Rebellion formulates its reason in practical duration; but the clarified statement of this reason breaks with the still-repetitive rule that commands this duration. Rebellion arms itself with its own reason, instead of simply deploying it. It concentrates its rational quality: it organizes its reason and sets out the instruments of its victory.

Knowing that one is right to rebel against the reactionaries, by delivering the (theoretical)

reason of this (practical) reason, allows one to make the subjective (organization, the project) equal to the objective (class struggle, rebellion). "Reason," which initially voiced revolutionary legitimacy and optimism, now speaks of the consciousness and mastery of history.

C. Reason as Contradiction

"It is right to rebel against the reactionaries" is indeed a sentence that says everything about historical movement, because it voices its energy, its sense, and its instrument. Its energy is class struggle, the objective rationality internal to rebellion. Its sense is the ineluctable collapse of the world of exploitation and oppression—that is, communist reason. The instrument is the possible direction of the relation, within history, between energy and sense, between class struggle (which is always and everywhere the motor of history) and the communist project (which is always and everywhere the value promoted by the rebellion of the oppressed). The instrument is reason become subject, it is the party.

"It is right to rebel against the reactionaries" voices the whole, because it speaks of class struggle and the primacy of practice, communism and the withering away of the state, the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The sentence voices integral reason, which is to say divided reason, according to the subjective and the objective, reality and project, the endpoint and the stages. And we can see how this integral reason is contradiction: it is impossible to be right, to have reason alone and for oneself. One is right, one has reason, against the reactionaries. One is always right against the reactionaries, the "against the reactionaries" is an internal condition of the true. That is also why Mao Zedong's sentence summarizes Marxism; it says: every reason contradicts. "True ideas emerge in the struggle against false ideas," reason is forged in the rebellion against unreason, against what the Chinese invariably call "reactionary absurdities."

Every truth affirms itself in the destruction of nonsense. Every truth is thus essentially destruction. Everything that simply conserves is simply false. The field of Marxist knowledge is always a field of ruins.

Mao Zedong's sentence tells us the whole dialectic: the class essence of reason as rebellion lies in the struggle to the death of opposites. Truth only exists in a process of scission.

The theory of contradictions is wholly implicated in the historical wisdom of rebels. That is why the dialectic has always existed, just like rebellions. The dialectic philosophically concentrates the conception of the world of the exploited who stand up against the existing world and will its radical change. That is why it is an eternal philosophical tendency, which unremittingly opposes itself to conservative metaphysical oppression: "Throughout the history of human knowledge, there have been two conceptions concerning the law of development of the universe: the metaphysical conception and the dialectical conception, which form two opposing world outlooks" (Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*).

It is always a question of continuing the dialectic, of continuing it against metaphysics, which means: to give reason to the rebels, to say that they are right. Today, to give reason to the true Marxism against the false. To the Maoists, against the revisionists.

Quotes from chapters 2 and 3

Chapter 2 – The search for the fundamental principles of the dialectic

p. 34

“That which the movement of the contradiction destroys, also prepares a scission within the destructor term”

Example: “negation of negation means simply that when, through the concentration of capitals the bourgeoisie destroys the property of the small independent workers, then it is the bourgeoisie itself that renders objectively possible the proletarian destruction of all private property. In fact, instead of having private property dispersed into a large working mass, the bourgeoisie concentrates it in the hand of few capitalists. The contradiction that opposes the capitalist accumulation to the small private property prepares the terrain for a new contradiction: one that opposes the proletariat to the capitalist property itself“

NB: negation of negation is thus not the affirmation of the first affirmation, but is the further affirmation of the contradiction included in the first term!

p. 36: “the absolute exists, as Mao and Lenin say loud and clear. The struggle, this is precisely what is absolute, only unity is relative”

p. 41

“the thing itself is the unity of the contraries”

“we have four principles of the dialectic:

- 1) interdependence (principle of totality)
- 2) each reality is movement, process
- 3) contradiction is the essence of such process
- 4) all development is in the shape of a spiral”

NB: these principles are taken from a reading of Lenin’s *Philosophical notebooks*

p. 42

From philosophy to politics, and from politics to philosophy.

In the conjuncture of the world war, revolted by the ‘sacred union’, the collaboration of classes, under the leadership of the imperialists, Lenin seizes dialectics as a thought of disjunction, of antagonism. He formulates for the first time that which is the true matrix of revolutionary dialectics, i.e. the principle “one divides into two”.

Here we have a true philosophical preparation of the scission in the worker’s movement, of the necessary destructive critique of the 2nd International. Under the ordeal of the First World War, we have here the inescapable unleashing of the struggle between two tendencies, a struggle that is the historical foundation of the decisive advancement of dialectical thought. In the same way, the struggle of the Chinese Communist Party against the Soviet Party was reflected, within China itself, in the intense philosophical polemics opposing the Leninist principle “one divides into two” to the capitulatory revisionist thesis, and that of a “peaceful coexistence” with no principle, whose philosophical concentrate was to pretend that the fundamental philosophical motto is the so-called law “two fuse into one”.

We see here clearly how only the furies of history are at work, in a creative manner (de façon créatrice) in the movement of knowledge.

...Lenin asserts with force the primacy of contradiction over identity:

“the unity (coincidence, identity, equivalence) of the contraries is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle between mutually-excluding contraries is absolute, as movement and development are also absolute”.¹

Struggle is the only absolute principle of dialectical thought: this is the essence of dialectics as a philosophy in revolt (philosophie revoltée)

Third Chapter – On contradiction

p. 51 first principle: all reality is a process

“the internal nature of things, their essence, is nothing other than the law of their transformation. This principle is set in what one can call a Heraclitian line of dialectics: everything changes....

Nevertheless, this simple and violent principle is nowadays menaced, it is a principle that needs to be constantly re-conquered in a drastic class struggle, because it is this very principle that draws the principal line of separation with the antagonist tendency: the metaphysical tendency. The essence of this principle (the principle of reality as process) consists in the affirmation that a given state of reality is by definition transitory, i.e. that the law of things is neither balance, nor structure, but the rupture of all balance, and, by consequence, the necessary development of the destruction of the current state of things. This is the revolutionary consequence of this principle: it draws its position from a point of view which is never that of conservation. In a certain sense, this principle repudiates all objectivism: that which is given in a certain moment as reality, is at its base nothing else than the movement through which this reality is dissolved and transformed into another. Properly speaking, the real does not come under the category of the object. The object is in fact that which is given to knowledge as a state or as figure. But the content of each state and each figure is the uninterrupted process of its own metamorphosis.

In this sense, the object is the opposite of process, in the same way that metaphysics is the opposite of dialectics. Metaphysics – which is precisely the theory of identity, is driven by a powerful conservative tendency. It is an enterprise which guards the given state of reality”.....

(p.52 →)”Philosophical revisionism consists precisely in this: to pretend to acknowledge that each reality is process, but fixing at the same time the concept of process, which converts the laws of transformation that regulate it into a new type of metaphysical invariants”

p. 52

“The idea of a simple beginning is a typical metaphysical point of departure, i.e. a conservative point of departure. The trace, in the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist philosophy, of the primacy of practice, is the fact that theory in itself cannot start anything. There is no such

¹ (Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks)

thing as a zero degree of theory: *The movement of knowledge has always already began, because it includes practice as one of its own terms.*"

p. 56 a non idealistic concept of the subject (i.e. a subject under conditions)

"The Origin (as well as the Constitutive, the Transcendental) are not the Subject, but its idealist predicates. That the Origin and God need to be dispensed with, which is a basic materialist need, can only result in the fact the concept of the subject divides itself into, on the one side, its idealist formulation, violently glued to ideological notions coming from a religious or juridical background, and, on the other side, its materialist formulation in the terms of a process. *A process with a subject.*

p.60 vs. Althusser

"the theory of a "process with no subject and no goal" deduces becoming as a diachronic effect of objective structures, instead explaining it in the terms of struggle and novelty".

Second principle: each process is a set of contradictions

p.61

The critique of the metaphysical principle of identity must be radical enough to assert the thesis the being of a transitory state of reality is transition itself, i.e. an internal division of which this state is a stage, a development.

It is not enough to say that things are in movement, it is necessary to acknowledge also that the very concept of a "thing" does not express a logic of unity, but a logic of scission. [...] Movement is not a succession, a series of unities, but a connection of divisions.²

One divides into two is not a principle of the genesis of the "two" starting from "one". One divides into two means: there is no identity except as divided. It is not only that reality is a process, but the process is division. The real is not that which gathers, but which divides. That which comes is that which disjoins.

p.p. 62-63

« (In each contradiction there is) an ascending term, a victorious term: an it is this term which is going to be the ground of a new unity, i.e. of a new division.

From here follows that the party of the proletariat – which is the concentrated form of its class being, of its antagonism with the bourgeoisie, and a decisive form of its victory (the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat) – is also the place of an uninterrupted series of divisions, the place par excellence of scission.

Old Hegel said already that "a party proves to be a victorious party when it divides itself, and when it can support division"

It is a strong encouragement for the Maoists to remember that Engels, against those whining for unity at all price [...] affirmed the creative value of divisions, and stressed the fact that it is through violent fights that a new type of 'workers solidarity' is forged, that is, a new advancement of the revolutionary proletariat.

² note of translator: One is a connection of a pure multiplicity, because each individual term that composes a unity is already a division, and so on..... This theme will become evident in *Being and Event*

Today in France, the conflictual diversity of groups is the expression of the *real* state of movement, and the violence of their conflicts is the place where the future is announced. One must dive into this conflicts and take clearly a position: all the rest is nothing but a false unanimity, an inoperative populism, or a sleepy revisionism. One divides into two.

Third principle: in every process, there is a primary contradiction

p. 66-69.

At this point one might think that the real as the intertwining of divisions has no particular domain or law, but is only a general system of this intertwining, of these connections. [...] But in fact one must know that each domain of reality has a specific dialectic coherence. Each system of contradiction has a qualitative determination, whose coherence is fixed by its subordination to a principal contradiction. There is no sense in talking about *a* process if we do not specify which is the system of contradictions whose interdependence is regulated by a qualitative subordination to *one* specific contradiction of the system.

...these links of interdependence can lead to the changing of the principal contradiction itself.

...if one understands the situation as an infinite repetition of the same principal contradiction, if one puts all the heterogeneous and deeply divided totalities into the same schematism, then one cannot understand where, and under which conditions, *the new rises as a becoming-principal of a secondary contradiction of a process.*

A dialectician is only the one who pushes the understanding of the principle of the principal contradiction to the stage where he can understand the becoming-principal of a secondary contradiction.

Fourth principle: every contradiction is asymmetrical and has a primary aspect

P. 70-71

A class never exists before class struggle. To exist is to be in opposition. The existence of a term is given completely within its contradictory relation to the other term of the scission. To say that one of the terms is principal, means that starting from its predominance in the process of scission one can determine the qualitative nature of the whole scission.

For example, France is a capitalist country, not only because the principal contradiction is the contradiction bourgeoisie/proletariat, but because within this principal contradiction, the bourgeoisie is the principal aspect of the contradiction: the bourgeoisie dominates, that is, it manages also to fix in its own advantage the modalities and the frame of its confrontation with the proletariat.

It is clear that the theory of the principal aspect, as that of the principal contradiction has, as its content, the shifting of the relationship between that which is principal and that which is not. The goal of dialectic is less the delineation of the principal than the becoming principal of the secondary and its related dialectical movement: the becoming secondary of the principal.

Nevertheless, "it has to be clear that the fact that the principal and the secondary are in a relation of mutual conversion, does not mean that the supreme law of dialectics is a simple principle of permutation, a simple exchange of places.

[...]

In fact, the law of exchange, of permutation, is the essential resource of all structuralist ideologies, whose political implications are well known: if the movement of reality is nothing but a combinatory shift of places, than it is certain that the essence of this movement resides in its invariants, i.e. in the rules which command the permutations.

If it was so, than all novelty would be just apparent: the displacement of terms from places to place leaves the structure of exchange intact.

The most active form of this conception today is anarchism. It poses that whenever there is some sort of a structure of power, a statist order, the distribution of places is fundamentally under the rule of the couple dominant/dominated, and that each apparent de-placement leaves intact the essential political structure.

The word “revolution” becomes itself suspect, because it signifies only the change of the principal aspect of the contradiction. That a proletarian party comes to occupy the place of the State is only a permutation with no interest. One prefers the word “subversion”, which designates the universal disaggregation of every dominant place, whatever it might be. One privileges the straying, the derived, the out-of-place, everything that is excluded – at least in appearance – from the combinatory and the game of permutations. One declares oneself to be at the margins: the marginal ...

[...]

The anarcho-desiring conception is completely porous to the solid bourgeois objectivism. Its vision of things opposes itself apparently to structuralism, because it fixes as its objective the dissolution of all structure. But it is profoundly structuralist, in that it doesn't think contradiction other than as a movement of substitution and excludes every apprehension of a qualitative difference between two types of domination.

For such type of thought, every scission is a movement of exchange, every struggle is reciprocal service, every victory is a defeat: in the same moment in which I submit my adversary to my own law, I fall under his, because I occupy the same place from he expresses himself, the dominant place.

In truth, anarchism is the simple inverse of conservatory structuralism. The derived is the shadow of the combinatory. Structuralism and the ideologies of Desire are profoundly resemblant. Instead of being opposed, they fuse together, in their common contradiction to the dialectic.

[...]

p. 75

The dialectic, in effect, in its formulation of the theory of the principal aspect, thinks – at the same time and through the movement of scission that is proper to it – both the identity (in terms of the permutation of places) and the non-identity (in terms of the qualitative rupture of the process of distribution of places taken as a whole). The dialectic enlivens the contradiction of the structural and the qualitative, of the combinatory and the differential evaluation of forces.

[...]

In the most general way, the sequential invariance of the domination of one term over the other is that through which materialism inscribes itself within the dialectical thesis. According to our example, the domination of the bourgeoisie leads to the objective existence of capitalism, to the process of extortion of the surplus value, which constitutes the general material base of all the historical phenomena in France today, and which is the objective foundation, scientifically analysable, of the statist power of the bourgeoisie.

[...]

...materialism is that which structures the contradiction by strategically fixing its place and its terms; dialectics is that which contradicts the structure, by thinking the inversion of the places, the non-fixity of the assignation of the terms.

pp. 79-80

The complete dialectical intelligibility of what is principal has to grasp not only the *state* of things, but also their *tendency*. What is principal from the point of view of the state of things and of the structure can be secondary from the point of view of the tendency. [...]

In order to understand things from the point of view of the future which is inside the present, one has to grasp the present as a tendency, as growth or its inverse, as the accumulation of forces, as rupture, and not only as a state or figure.

[...]

In the end “principal” designates the double nature of each term of the contradiction taken in its correlation to the other term. “Principal” follows the divided thought of the process of scission. Each term stands at the same time in a given relationship of domination or dependency, and in the negation of this state.

[...]

The being of a structure is a hierarchical combination, but its existence, or its history, confounds itself with its destruction. Structure in fact has no other existence than the movement of its own loss, and each term of the contradiction reflects this transitory mode of existence in the division of its own being, in its own division, a division of itself that is accomplished in two directions: its being-for-the-structure, and its being-for-the-dissolution. The proletarian class is structurally determined as an exploited class in the process of production, and anti-structurally determined as the revolutionary class leading to the destruction of the capitalist mode of production.

The complete concept of « principal » is thus the contradictory unity of the structural and the tendential. If one considers only one of these two poles, he slips immediately into metaphysics.