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## Dialectic Materialism in the Research of Life

Presentation on the Bion-Experiments

*(Held on May 1, 1937, in conjunction with the opening  
of the participating laboratory in Oslo)*

by Wilhelm Reich

Dear Friends and Colleagues!

It is no coincidence that we arranged for the opening of the institute's participating laboratory for May 1<sup>st</sup>. Labor Day and laborers are celebrated internationally on May 1<sup>st</sup>. That doesn't mean that the expression "May 1<sup>st</sup>" is not misused by reactionary parties. Joined in the production process are all areas whether manufacturing, scientific research, or agriculture, and it is not right to exclude scientific work from the general category of labor as it is so often done from the side of academia. Another important reason to select this date is the fact that our work in experimental science is based on the principles of *dialectic-materialistic* research methods. May 1<sup>st</sup> as Labor Day and dialectic materialism as the method of acquiring scientific knowledge go directly together. One of its principles is the so-called "Unity of Theory and Practice." I am tasked with the job of explaining the difficult, theoretical questions of scientific research methods to you, most of whom are not specially trained biologists, in such a manner that the advantages of the dialectic materialistic method compared to other research methods become crystal clear. Should I fail at this, then I will only prove that I poorly apply dialectic materialism.

What is dialectic materialism? Concepts are subjected to a lot of nonsense. I remember that during the time when Hitler took power over Germany, one attempted to employ dialectic materialism by discussing the “dialectic unity of coincidence and necessity.” However, it was not meant this way. Dialectic materialism is a very simple, I would almost like to say, *the* simple, humane way of viewing things and events. This does not indicate superficiality. It merely means that man is part of nature, the object of processes and also the subject of social activity. He forms a unit with everything that he observes, works with, or creates. It was Hegel’s brilliant idea to rip the philosophical reasoning of his time out of its static rigidity by delineating the law of change, the flow in all that exists. However, with Hegel, the world, the thing, the process was nothing more than the reflection of human “ideals”. Marx succeeded in, as he put it, getting the dialectic method “up and running.” According to him, human concepts are reversed, reflections of scientifically understandable processes and events. And a concept is then correct when it *immediately* reflects the objective process. Using the difficulties associated with our work in biology, I will now attempt to describe the unusual and natural innovative application of dialectic materialism, especially in biology.

In biological science, one encounters very unusual and apparently unsolvable contradictions. For example, one advocates the decree: “Living things come only from Living Things.” Organic nature and inorganic nature are understood to be two strictly separate, independent areas. However, in contrast to this, biological research everywhere is occupied with the question of “Life in Non-Living Matter,” with the old problem of the creation of Life from the non-living. During this, non-living matter often becomes mystically alive. Artificially producing living protein by combining and complicating protein molecules has also been attempted. I remember the first successful experiment by *Fischer* to synthetically produce urea.

**Between individual organic materials and a live, functioning clump of plasma; however, lie more than quantitative differences. A difference in the *functionality* is present. The contradiction is that, on the one side, one strictly separates the living and non-living, but on the other side attempts to construct it mechanically from the non-living using “synthesis.”**

**Another contradiction is between mechanics and vitalism. Mechanics claim, and rightly so, that all living things are similarly governed by physical, chemical, and electrical processes as are non-living thing, that it is “the same thing.”**