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VOLUME LII  
DIALECTICS OF THE CONCRETE

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KAREL KOSÍK

DIALECTICS  
OF THE CONCRETE

*A Study on Problems of Man and World*



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DIALEKTIKA KONKRÉTNÍHO

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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

Kosík writes that the history of a text is in a certain sense the history of its interpretations. In the fifteen years that have passed since the first (Czech) edition of his *Dialectics of the Concrete*, this book has been widely read and interpreted throughout Europe, in diverse centers of scholarship as well as in private studies. A faithful English language edition is long overdue. This publication of Kosík's work will surely provoke a range of new interpretations. For its theme is the characterization of science and of rationality in the context of the social roots of science and the social critique which an appropriately rational science should afford.

Kosík's question is: How shall Karl Marx's understanding of science itself be understood? And how can it be further developed? In his treatment of the question of scientific rationality, Kosík drives bluntly into the issues of gravest human concern, not the least of which is how to avoid the pseudo-concrete, the pseudo-scientific, the pseudo-rational, the pseudo-historical. Starting with Marx's methodological approach, of "ascending from the abstract to the concrete", Kosík develops a critique of positivism, of phenomenalist empiricism, and of "metaphysical" rationalism, counterposing them to "dialectical rationalism". He takes the category of the concrete in the dialectical sense of that which comes to be known by the active transformation of nature and society by human purposive activity. In his wide-ranging critique of contemporary science and culture, Kosík gives a detailed account and interpretation of Marx's own methodology, in *Capital*.

Kosík's understanding of science, nature, human nature, and culture deserve a lively new audience with this translation, for the methodological and philosophical understanding of social science must once more try to come to terms with the genius of Karl Marx. Kosík's insights into the sciences are the outcome of his evident concern to read Marx once again, faithfully and deeply. May we, for our part, point briefly to Kosík on science?

"The purely intellectual process of science transforms man into an abstract unit, integrated in . . . a system, (and) this reflects the real metamorphosis of man performed by capitalism".

". . . through the methodological approach, reality itself is changed: *methodology is ontologized*".

“Man can penetrate the mysteries of nature only because he *forms* a human reality”.

“Human praxis unites causality and purposiveness”.

“... cybernetics posed anew the question of what is specifically human”.

“... Marx proved this objective character of laws of science ... independent of the scientist’s subjective intentions”.

Now we invite readers to think through Karel Kosík’s understanding of these provocative themes in the philosophy of the sciences, which lead to his understanding of the concrete human life.

R. S. COHEN

M. W. WARTOFSKY

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October 1976*

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