

# THE NATURE OF HUMAN BRAIN WORK

## An Introduction to Dialectics

**Joseph Dietzgen**

**Afterword by Larry Gambone**

Called by Marx "The Philosopher" of socialism, Joseph Dietzgen was a pioneer of dialectical materialism and a fundamental influence on anarchist and socialist thought who we would do well not to forget.

Dietzgen examines what we do when we think. He discovered that thinking is a process involving two opposing processes: generalization, and specialization. All thought is therefore a dialectical process. Our knowledge is inherently limited however, which makes truth relative and the seeking of truth on-going. The only absolute is existence itself, or the universe, everything else is limited or relative. Although a philosophical materialist, he extended these concepts to include all that was real, existing or had an impact upon the world. Thought and matter were no longer radically separated as in older forms of materialism. *The Nature of Human Brain Work* is vital for theorists today in that it lays the basis for a non-dogmatic, flexible, non-sectarian, yet principled socialist politics.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

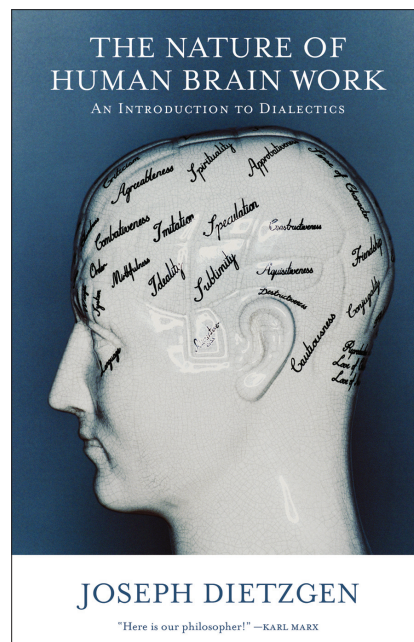
Born near Cologne in 1828, Joseph Dietzgen worked most of his life as a tanner. A self-educated man, he participated in the Revolution of 1848 where he first read the writings of Karl Marx and became one of his supporters. Exiled from Germany after the failed revolution, he spent time in both America and Russia, where he wrote his most famous work *The Nature of Human Brain Work*, published in 1869, before returning to Germany. In 1884 he moved to the United States for the third and last time after being imprisoned in Germany for his political writing. He became editor of the anarchist *Chicagoer Arbeiterzeitung* when its previous editors were hung by the State in response to the Haymarket bombings. When he died two years later he was buried beside them in Chicago.

### ACCOLADES

"Here is our philosopher!"—Karl Marx

"...brilliant contributions to the theory of knowledge."  
—Anton Pannekoek

"Left...a fine legacy of wisdom in his writings."—Friedrich A. Sorge



**SUBJECT CATEGORY**  
POLITICS/PHILOSOPHY

**PRICE**  
\$20.00

**ISBN**  
978-1-60486-036-8

**PAGE COUNT**  
176

**SIZE**  
5.5 X 8.5

**FORMAT**  
PAPERBACK

**PUBLICATION DATE**  
02/01/10

**DISTRIBUTED BY**  
Independent Publishers Group  
(312) 337-0747  
[www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com)

■ **PM PRESS** ■  
P.O. Box 23912  
Oakland, CA 94623  
[www.pmpress.org](http://www.pmpress.org)

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