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**The Dialectics of the Historical
Process and the Methodology
of Its Research**



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1. Introduction. Posing the Problem

Our time is a time of great social transformations. Tasks such as the revolutionary transition of various countries from capitalism to socialism, the ongoing scientific and technological revolution, the urgent need to protect the environment, etc. demand an increasingly more accurate and deeper foresight into the development of social life, and the further development of Marxist-Leninist theory. “Marxism-Leninism is the only reliable basis for developing the correct strategy and tactics. It provides us with an understanding of the historical perspective, helps determine the direction of socio-economic and political development for many years to come, and gives us a correct orientation in international events. The strength of Marxism-Leninism lies in its constant creative development”.

Historical materialism provides general methodological guidelines for the activity of working people as conscious creators of history. Within the framework of historical materialism, there are two extremely important aspects in studying the process of social development.^[2]

Which aspects are we talking about?

In Marxism-Leninism, the life of society is viewed through the prism of the theory of socio-economic

formations. This is one aspect. Many works of Soviet researchers, including those published in recent years, are devoted to problems of socio-economic formations.^[3]

Significantly less attention has been paid to the study of the methodology of the types of social development. This is the second aspect. This second aspect primarily includes the division of human history by the classics of Marxism-Leninism into prehistory and actual history, beginning with the Great October Socialist Revolution. With such a division, communism appears not only as a particular socio-economic formation but as actual history, a new type of historical development of humanity compared to all previous history.

Why were the main efforts directed to the development of the theory of socio-economic formations, while the issue of the types of social development was and still is pushed to the background?

The very content of the modern era has forced and continues to force the issue of socio-economic formations to the foreground.

At the same time, in the future, historical development will bring to the forefront the issue of the types of social development, their sequence, interconnections, internal structure, etc. However, the issue of the types of social development is also of great importance for understanding the present, both because it relies on a certain tendency of contemporary development and because the assessment of future prospects influences the understanding and practice of current events.

Why is it that the main content of the modern era currently demands undivided attention to the issue of socio-economic formations, and why is prioritising

the issue of the types of socio-economic development important for understanding the future?

“The modern era, the main content of which is the transition from capitalism to socialism, is an era of struggle between two opposing social systems, an era of socialist and national liberation revolutions, an era of the collapse of imperialism, the liquidation of the colonial system, an era of transition to the socialist path by more and more nations, the triumph of socialism and communism on a global scale”.^[4] Consequently, the main content of our era is the revolutionary struggle of socialism against capitalism. Capitalism, however, is a particular socio-economic formation. From this perspective, the transition from capitalism to a new society appears primarily as a transition from one formation to another. This is of significant importance for the theory of social development.

When the task of building communism (first its initial phase—socialism) comes to the forefront on a global scale, it will become practically essential to understand that communism is the actual history of humanity in relation to all previous history, i.e., the issue of the types of social development.

The transition to communism means not only the abolition of capitalism, not only the eradication of the features inherent in capitalism as a particular socio-economic formation, but also a fundamental transformation of all social relations that emerged before communism. The transition to communism is a process deeper than just the abolition of capitalism. When the transition to communism is put into practice, social transformations appear much deeper, more significant than when the task of abolishing, negating capitalism is in the foreground.

Consequently, the realisation on a global scale of the transition from socialism to communism will and already does necessitate the further development of the theory and history of society, as well as increases the need for a deeper understanding of the historical process by the broad masses of working people—

actively fighting for the new society.

One of the most important methodological issues is the understanding of society as a system.

The development of large-scale industry within the framework of capitalism already necessitates a holistic approach to the research of society. For large-scale industry “... produced world history for the first time, insofar as it made all civilised nations and every individual member of them dependent for the satisfaction of their wants on the whole world, thus destroying the former natural exclusiveness of separate nations.”^[5] The formation of the world economic system and the entirety of history as a whole takes place under capitalism as the struggle of opposing tendencies: the tendency towards the formation of a unified world economy, stemming from the social character of production, and the tendency towards the isolation of various countries, various parts, spheres, etc., of the world economy, a tendency rooted in the existence of private ownership of the means of production.

With the establishment of public ownership of the means of production, even in one or several countries, the economy and the whole of society as a specific system rise to a qualitatively higher level. Only in the new, socialist and communist society does it become possible for the first time to plan the development of society as a whole. But the conscious development of society, the management of this development, requires knowledge of all aspects, all spheres of social life and their interconnections, interactions, i.e., knowledge of society as a unified system.

The need for a deeper understanding of the entire history of humanity also sharply increases. Communism is the result of the development of all past history. The result can only be fully understood in connection with the process that led to it. In building communism, the further study of human history is both theoretically and practically important, as the construction of communism presupposes a complete restructuring not only of what had its

roots in capitalist society but also of those relations, traditions, habits, etc., that trace their lineage back to pre-capitalist societies.

Thus, when the tasks of building a new society come to the forefront in global social development, the theoretical focus shifts to the study of communism as the true history of humanity in relation to all past history, to the research of the types of social development, to the study of society as a whole, as a system. Moreover, the issue of society as a system and the issue of the types of social development are internally interconnected. For in the first case, it is primarily about the functioning of society in the unity of all its aspects, spheres, etc., while in the second case, it is about the historical development of society as a system, as a whole.

The research of social development as a system is impossible without the use of the methodological heritage of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, primarily without the use of the method of “Capital” by K. Marx.

In “Capital” by K. Marx, for the first time in history, the subject of an entire science (political economy of capitalism) was researched and presented as a developing system through the application of the dialectical-materialist method. Marx’s political-economic research remains an unsurpassed example of a consistent, holistic, and detailed representation of the subject as a developing system. Therefore, the use of the method of “Capital” by K. Marx on the theory and history of society is of exceptional importance.

The method applied by K. Marx in “Capital” is the only possible scientific method for a holistic representation of social development.

But the method, the logic of “Capital,” does not lie on the surface. Dedicated research is necessary to separate it from the politico-economic material and present it specifically. The task of isolating the Logic of “Capital” (Logic with a capital L, i.e., logic in its universal form) was set by V. I. Lenin. Soviet

researchers have done significant and fruitful work in fulfilling this testament of V. I. Lenin.

In what follows, we will try to present the results of these efforts and how they can be applied to the research of the theory and history of society.

The next piece of content will be published in future issues.

Notes

[1] Moscow, “Znaniye” Publishing House, 1978 – 2nd edition, 2007. Translated from the second edition.

[2] Materials of the XXV Congress of the CPSU. M., 1976, p. 72.

[3] See, for example, the works of I. L. Andreev, Yu. M. Boroday, V. Zh. Kelle, E. G. Plimak, E. N. Zhukov, E. N. Lysmankin, and others.

[4] Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. M., 1976, p. 5.

[5] Karl Marx, The German Ideology, Part I: Feuerbach.

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2. The Methodology of Research of the Development of Society

The template for researching society at a certain historical stage of its development is the greatest work of Marxism-Leninism, Karl Marx’s *Capital*.

In *Capital*, Karl Marx not only brilliantly revealed the economic relations of the capitalist socio-economic formation, but also outlined, intertwined with political-economic material, the most profound scientific foundation of the materialist understanding of history and the systematic development of dialectical-materialist logic. “Now,” emphasised V. I. Lenin, “since the appearance of *Capital*—the materialist conception of history is no longer a hypothesis, but a scientifically proven proposition.”^[1] And F. Engels wrote: “The working out of the method which underlies K. Marx’s critique of political economy is, we think, a result hardly less significant than the basic materialist conception.”^[2]

To understand what F. Engels means when speaking of the method developed by K. Marx, one should pay attention to another thought from the same work: “The purpose of a work like the one under review cannot simply be desultory criticism of separate

sections of political economy or the discussion of one or another economic issue in isolation. On the contrary, it is from the beginning designed to give a systematic résumé of the whole complex of political economy and a coherent elaboration of the laws governing bourgeois production and bourgeois exchange. This elaboration is at the same time a comprehensive critique of economic literature, for economists are nothing but interpreters of and apologists for these laws.

Hardly any attempt has been made since Hegel’s death to set forth any branch of science in its specific inner coherence.”^[3]

The object of scientific research in *Capital* is the capitalist socio-economic formation as an “organic whole” (K. Marx).

What is an organic whole? An organic whole is a whole primarily characterised by the internal interconnection, the internal interaction of its parts. If this whole is dissected into its constituent parts, its very essence disappears. For example, if we were to dissect any living organism into its constituent elements, parts, etc., life would be destroyed.

K. Marx’s approach to the capitalist socio-economic formation as an organic whole is fundamentally different from that of bourgeois economists.

Before K. Marx, economists viewed society primarily as a sum of isolated individuals, as a whole, the elements of which are mainly connected externally. An element (part, etc.) of such a whole, considered separately from other elements, largely retains its specificity.

The bourgeois political economy’s representation of the isolated individual, or the so-called “robinsonade,” grew out of private property. Private

property alienates people from each other. In the grip of private property relations, people imagine man as an “atom,” as an isolated individual, and society as a mechanical aggregate of such individuals.

K. Marx, who practically and theoretically defended the interests of the class destined by the objective course of history to lead the struggle for public property, also emphasised internal interconnection, internal interaction in the field of methodology. This allowed him, in analysing private property, to explain the life of society and to understand private property itself as a social relation.

The object of research as an organic whole was already studied by Hegel. K. Marx’s position, however, differs fundamentally from Hegel’s views on the organic whole.

For Hegel, the organic whole appeared essentially as an exclusively spiritual product. In other words, the organic whole was imagined by him as not existing within objective reality, independently from thought. The representation, the thought of the organic whole, was in fact understood as detached from this reality.

As a result, the link with the soil on which and from which the representation of the true organic whole grows, has been severed. Naturally, in such a case, the thought of the organic whole (identified with the actual organic whole itself), as it was formed in the mind of the thinker, appears essentially unchanged.

Hegel’s methodology expresses the great thinker’s attempt to overcome the alienation of people from each other. However, this attempt was undertaken on the basis of preserving the existing, antagonistic society, and therefore the only way to overcome alienation was to overcome it in thought, in representation, i.e., detached from the actual overcoming of social antagonisms.

K. Marx, expressing the views of the consistently revolutionary class, the class leading the struggle of all working people against exploitation, the struggle for the abolition of the old, antagonistic society, in the field of methodology, firstly, strictly distinguished

the real organic whole from its reflection in thought, and secondly, consistently viewed the organic whole in the process of its development.

Thus, K. Marx’s dialectical-materialist approach is internally united with a strictly defined practical political position. Moreover, the correct practical political position serves as a necessary basis for developing a true methodology.

However, the correct practical political position by itself does not automatically generate the correct methodology. The theoretical reflection of the real existing organic whole is very complex and is carried out through a process of developing contradictions.

What are the paths, ways, and means of reflecting the organic whole in the process of its development?

First, let us name them. The organic whole in the process of its development is reflected—if we speak in the most general terms—by the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete, as well as through the unity of logical and historical consideration. Moreover, in our view, the mechanism of ascent from the abstract to the concrete consists in the interrelation of the categories of surface, essence, phenomenon, and reality.^[4]

Where does the reflection of the organic whole begin? First, the necessary prerequisite for the reflection of the organic whole is its actual existence. The actually existing organic whole can be denoted by the term “real concrete.” The actually existing organic whole is initially reflected sensually, in live observation, perceived mainly directly, externally. The aspects of the object that come into view appear mainly as unrelated to each other; a holistic understanding of the object is almost absent. Familiarisation with individual aspects, etc. and their separate study, i.e., analysis, predominates.

It would be wrong, however, to say that only the perception and study of individual aspects of the object take place here. From the very beginning, people’s attention is drawn to this organic whole by some vital need. For example, the research of

bourgeois economists was driven by the need to increase bourgeois wealth.

Wanting to understand the need and what can satisfy it, gives rise to an assumption about the object as a whole, outlining, at first very roughly, the boundaries of the object of interest. This assumption, the initial representation of the object under study, guides the analysis. The analysis generally proceeds, by random deviations, from the consideration of the more complex aspects of the object to its increasingly simpler aspects, until the simplest aspect of this organic whole is identified. It should be kept in mind that although the whole is given as is, the aspects of the object are mainly understood separately. For example, K. Marx describes the path that bourgeois political economy took at its inception: “When we consider a given country politico-economically, we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, commodity prices etc. It seems to be correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus, to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labour, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage labour, without value, money, price etc. Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [Vorstellung] of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [Begriff], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey

would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations”^[5].

Thus, the cognition of the organic whole initially proceeds from a chaotic perception^[6] of the whole, i.e., of the concrete, as it is given in perception, in live observation, to ever simpler definitions, until, finally, the simplest aspect (relation, etc.) of the whole is identified. On this path, analysis predominates. But even here, the path of cognition is contradictory. Analysis is taking place in unity with synthesis. The existence of a social need to know about this object, the assumptions about what it is, directs cognition and forces one to look for connections between the aspects being analysed. Nevertheless, initially, analysis still dominates.

This is the real initial path of cognition. Awareness of it, however, can also be one-sided. The predominance of analysis can obscure the presence of moments of synthesis in this process of cognition, and then the initial stage of cognition of the organic whole will appear as purely analytical. This was typical of the classics of bourgeois political economy^[7].

What is the final point of this path of cognition from a chaotic perception of the whole?—The isolation of the simplest aspect, the simplest relation of the organic whole.

What is the simplest aspect (relation) if we define it in relation to the above path of cognition?—It is the limit of the dissection of the organic whole. Further dissection goes beyond the scope of this object. For example, the simplest relation of the capitalist economy is the commodity. The commodity has use-value and value. Value cannot be understood without understanding what use-value is. But use-value cannot be taken as the simplest relation when considering the capitalist economy, because value does not only exist under capitalism, and even then, it does not only exist in relation to commodities. If we take use-value as the simplest relation, the specificity

of capitalism will be lost. In other words, the simplest aspect is the most abstract concept. Abstraction is a detachment. In determining the simplest aspect, the thinking subject achieves the maximum detachment from all other aspects of the object. Consequently, the considered path of cognition is the path from a chaotic perception of the whole to the simplest relation, aspect, from the sensory concrete to the abstract.

After the stage of cognition during which the organic whole was primarily dissected into separate aspects, which were mainly studied separately, and increasingly simpler aspects were identified, the next stage begins. At this stage, the main task is to determine the interconnection, unity, interaction of various aspects. Moreover, cognition moves mainly from the simplest aspect of the organic whole to its increasingly more complex aspects. This movement of cognition is called the ascent from the abstract to the concrete. The result of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete constitutes such a reflection of the actually existing organic whole, in which the aspects of the organic whole are understood not chaotically, not disconnected from each other, but in unity with each other. However, as already mentioned above, the very essence of the organic whole consists in the specific, distinctive unity of its various aspects. Consequently, at the stage of cognition when the ascent from the abstract to the concrete predominates, the main aim of research is to reveal the essence of the organic whole.

At the previous stage, the connection, when observed, appears mainly as a simple coexistence of the aspects of the object alongside one another or as their sequential succession, i.e., mainly as an external connection of the aspects.

At the stage of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, the reflection of the internal connection, internal unity of the aspects predominates, i.e., of such a connection that each aspect becomes defined in its essence precisely because of its connection with

other aspects of the organic whole.

The concrete, as a result, the final point of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, is the unity (and mainly internal unity) of various diverse definitions of the object.

In the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, synthesis predominates. At the same time, just as at the first stage, analysis, though predominant, was carried out in unity with synthesis, so in the stage of ascent from the abstract to the concrete, synthesis, though predominant, is carried out in unity with analysis. Just as the establishment of the difference of individual aspects (i.e., analysis) is impossible without some similarity between them, so the establishment of the unity of aspects (i.e., synthesis) is impossible without the establishment of the difference between them. But the predominance of analysis or synthesis is possible. The spotlight of our conscience, so to speak, can illuminate either one or the other. Either the illuminated area contains the difference of the aspects, and their connection is in the shade, or, on the contrary, the unity of the aspects is illuminated, and their difference is in the shade.

Consequently, in one way or another, human thinking in both the first and second stages is carried out in the unity of these opposites—analysis and synthesis. Moreover, the stages themselves act as opposites in relation to each other: at the first stage, analysis predominates, and at the second stage—synthesis. In general—if we take the main line of the movement of cognition—the reflection of the organic whole is carried out in a spiral; first, an assumption about the object emerges, the object appears mainly as an undivided whole (although certain differences of aspects are already present here), then the aspects of the object are isolated and studied separately; finally, as it were, a return to the initial “holistic” representation of the object occurs, but rather on the basis of knowledge of its individual aspects and as the determination of the unity of internal relations of the aspects of the object.

The ascent from the abstract to the concrete represents the main stage in the reflection of the organic whole, because it is at this stage that the primary task becomes the revelation of the internal connections, the internal unity of the aspects of the organic whole, in other words, the totality of laws and regularities^[8], the essence of the organic whole.

In the history of human cognition, there have been two most typical errors in relation to the stages of cognition described above. The actual process of cognition is very complex and difficult, and these mistakes can occur under certain conditions—although not in a developed form—even in individual cognition. Knowledge of the history and essence of errors is quite effective medicine against them.

The first typical error. The thinking subject perceives the movement from a chaotic perception of the whole, from the sensory concrete to the abstract in isolation from the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, perceives analysis in isolation from synthesis, and absolutises the movement from a chaotic perception of the whole, from the sensory concrete to the abstract, absolutises analysis. We have seen, however, that the first stage precedes the second and includes the second as a subordinated, undeveloped moment. Such an error, if consistently adhered to, leads to a disorderly, chaotic accumulation of knowledge, to gliding on the surface of objects, processes, to the denial of the essence, to the denial of internal, on the surface invisible connections of objects, processes. In its most pronounced form, such a position is inherent in the vulgar economists in the field of political economy, and in the positivists in the field of philosophy.

The second typical error. The ascent from the abstract to the concrete is detached from the opposite path of cognition, synthesis is detached from analysis, and the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is absolutised, synthesis is absolutised. This error in its most developed and consistent form, is represented in Hegel's logic.

Hegel expressed many brilliant assumptions about the place and role of the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete in conscience, about its mechanism, etc. However, Hegel presented the ascent from the abstract to the concrete as the only way of forming knowledge and deprived the opposite path of cognition of any real cognitive significance.

What does this mean and where does it lead?

The movement from the sensory concrete to the abstract is the movement from live observation to thought, to concept, it is the process of comparing thoughts with sensory data, with how the real object is presented in live observation, it is the comparison of thoughts, concepts with facts.

To deprive the movement from the sensory concrete to the abstract of any real cognitive significance and to assert that only the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is real cognition, is to detach the path of thought from comparison with sensory data, with the data of live observation, with facts, is to recognise that the development of thought does not depend on the actual state of things.

In a more general form, this means that thought is detached from actual reality and is presented as merely self-generated. And that is nothing but idealism.

The consistent, dialectical materialist understanding of the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete necessarily includes the following moments.

First, the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is not a pure self-generation of thought in itself, but a reflection of the real organic whole, the real concrete.

The more developed the real concrete, the more developed, of course, the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete can be. In the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, the essence, the internal connections of the organic whole are mainly reflected, and the reflection is carried out from the simplest relation of the organic whole to increasingly complex relations of that whole.

For the method of the ascent from the abstract to

the concrete to become the dominant reflection of the organic whole, it is necessary for this whole to mature, for its aspects, its relations, to take shape. The simplest relation becomes truly the simplest relation of this organic whole when the remaining, more complex relations of this whole are formed.

Secondly. The correct application of the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete necessarily presupposes the preliminary realisation of the stage of the movement of cognition from a chaotic perception of the whole, from the sensory concrete to the abstract. This applies both to science as a whole and to the individual. Science, the object of which is this organic whole, must pass through the stage in which the movement of cognition from the sensory concrete to the abstract predominates. The thinking individual must be sufficiently developed so that in their cognition of this organic whole the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete can become dominant. To do this they must also pass through the stage in their development where the movement of cognition from the sensory concrete to the abstract predominates.

Thirdly, both paths of the movement of cognition—from the sensory concrete to the abstract and from the abstract to the concrete—must always be taken in their unity, but at the same time, the predominance of one or the other at different stages of cognition should be noted.

Concluding the section devoted to the consideration of the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, it seems appropriate to us, after its general characterisation, to return to the mechanism of this path of cognition, but now from a more rigorous, categorical point of view. Without such a characterisation, it is impossible to present the question of the relationship between the historical and the logical approach in a sufficiently precise and complete manner.

The mechanism of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is more fully and rigorously revealed,

in our view, in the interrelation, interconnection of the categories “surface,” “essence,” “phenomenon,” “reality.”

The term “surface” is used here to denote the level of understanding of an object that exists at the very beginning of its representation in thought. At this stage of thinking, the object appears primarily as something given directly.

Let us consider the universal moments of the representation in thought of two interacting aspects of an organic whole. Where does the representation begin? It begins with the representation of the aspect that appears on the surface of the object, directly grasped.

Thus, in *Capital*, K. Marx begins his study of the commodity with use-value, i.e., with that which first catches the eye. This aspect is primarily characterised in itself, independently of the other aspect interacting with it.

Then, the external connection between the first, superficial, external aspect and the other aspect is revealed. In *Capital*, for example, K. Marx shows that use-value serves as a bearer of value under certain conditions.

From establishing the external connection between the first and second aspects, thought moves on to the characterisation of the second, internal aspect in itself, considered independently of the first. In *Capital*, having examined the use-value of the commodity in itself and established its external connection with value, K. Marx proceeds to define value in itself, independently of use-value. The second, internal aspect of the interaction emerges as the essence of the interaction. Only at this level does the self-motion of the object begin to be understood. To reach the cognition of the essence of the object is to reach the reflection of its internal contradictions.

We have mentioned that the second aspect, the essence of the object, is now considered in itself, independently of the first aspect. This does not mean, however, that what we learned about the first aspect

is completely forgotten. In the dialectical movement of thought, the previous path of cognition does not disappear entirely but is preserved in a sublated, transformed form. In the second aspect, the first is sublated, becoming a moment of the second. The essence of the object is contradictory: the object in its essence relates to itself as it would to another, external object.

After the essence has been defined in itself, thought embarks on the reverse path: from essence back to the surface. But now the surface appears differently, with other aspects and facets than before the essence was defined. Now, only those facets of the surface through which the essence “shines through” or manifests itself become interesting. This is the phenomenon of the essence of the object. In his analysis of the commodity, K. Marx, after first considering use-value in itself, then the external connection between use-value and value, and finally value in itself, expounds the theory of the forms of the manifestation of value, thus returning, as it were, to use-value, since value manifests itself only in the relations of the use-values of commodities.

Finally, the unity of phenomenon and essence, as well as the form of this unity, is specifically observed. The formed unity of phenomenon and essence is reality. It should be noted that the term “reality” is used here not in the senses of “actuality” “matter,” “realised possibility,” etc. It is important not to confuse these meanings with each other.

Thought moved from the way the object appeared on the surface to its depth, and then the movement became the opposite. In reflecting the reality of the object, thinking returned to the surface, but now to the surface understood on the basis of the essence, and therefore of other facets, moments of the surface.

Only on the path of considering the essence in itself and on the path of movement from the essence to the phenomenon and reality do the internal interconnections and relations become the object of special consideration. On the path from the surface to

the essence, the analysis of the external connections and relationships comes to the fore.

However, it would be insufficient to say only this. Thought is constantly moving in opposite directions, realising itself as the unity of opposites. Even on the way from the surface to the essence, the opposite movement of thought is present as a subordinated moment, although it does not dominate. Thus, K. Marx defines use-value before value, bearing in mind its connection with value, although he does not yet consider this connection itself. In defining use-value per se, K. Marx abstracts from what generates need and how the given thing satisfies human need. He does not explain why he emphasises one thing and omits another. Only later, in the specific characterisation of commodity exchange, can the reader discover these reasons.

Consequently, thought moves both from the surface to the essence and from the essence to the surface, although the first path dominates. On the path from essence to phenomenon and reality, the situation changes to the exact opposite: the movement from the essence to the phenomenon and reality dominates, while the movement from the surface to the essence remains as a subordinated moment.

Mastering the theoretical representation of the organic whole must also be both a movement forward and a return, as it were, to material already mastered.

The method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete is applicable to the extent that certain features of the developmental process have matured. In its classical, most complete form, the method of the ascent is the mental representation of the mature stage of the developmental process, which constitutes an organic whole.

The problem of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, formulated in this way, turns out to be a problem of the historical and the logical, namely, the problem of the actual process of development (historical approach) and its representation in thought (logical approach).

The real organic whole develops.

The question arises: what are the stages of development of the real organic whole, and what stages of cognition are determined by them?

The organic whole does not form instantaneously. Initially, preconditions emerge, or, in other words, the beginning of the object. At this stage, the object itself does not yet exist. Thus, before the emergence of capitalism, pre-capitalist commodity-money relations emerge.

In the next stage, the object itself appears for the first time. This is the primary emergence of the given organic whole. For example, the primary emergence of capitalism is established with the appearance of the commodity “labour power.” Primary emergence means that the given organic whole, the given object, has emerged.

Then begins the transformation of the inherited system by the newly emerging organic whole, the system from which and on the basis of which it emerged. This is the process of formation of the new organic whole.

The completion of the transformation of the inherited basis by the emerging new organic whole represents the maturity of that new organic whole. At this stage, the contradictions leading to the transformation of the new whole into a different object become clearly apparent.

These are the main stages, steps of the progressive development of the object as an organic whole. They necessarily correspond to quite clearly defined stages of cognition.

The stages of development of an immature organic whole are predominantly reproduced through the movement from a chaotic perception of the whole, from the sensory concrete to the abstract, while the ascent from the abstract to the concrete plays a subordinated role. The situation changes to the exact opposite in the process of representing the mature organic whole: now the ascent from the abstract to the concrete dominates, while the movement from

a chaotic perception of the whole, from the sensory concrete to the abstract, becomes a subordinated moment.

The maturity of the organic whole is a stage in the process of its development. The past is not fully preserved in the present, but it does not disappear entirely; it is preserved in the present in a transformed form. The present changes, develops, and thus, in one way or another, contains the seeds of the future, it is transforming into the future.

Therefore, according to Marxist understanding, the ascent from the abstract to the concrete must be such a representation of the existing stage of development, such a representation of the present, that it also represents the past and the future within the present.

The mature stage of the development of the organic whole is mentally represented through the movement of thought from the surface to the essence and from the essence to the phenomenon and reality of the organic whole. This movement of thought is not only a reproduction of the existing organic whole but also, at the same time, in a sublated form, the history of its formation.

In the movement of thought from the surface to the essence, the historical process of the formation of preconditions and the primary emergence of the given organic whole is represented in a sublated form, while in the movement from the essence to the phenomenon and reality, the process of transformation of the inherited basis by the newly emerged organic whole is considered in a transformed form. For example, in *Capital*, K. Marx first characterises the commodity, money, and the transformation of money into capital. Logically, this is the path from the surface of capital to its essence, but at the same time, the historical development of the preconditions of capital and its emergence is represented here in a sublated form.

The past is not only transformed but is preserved in the present in a transformed form. The present does not relate to the past in such a way that the

past is completely deprived of its independence. This is how Hegel understood the relationship between the past and the present. Applied to the historical development of humanity, this meant that the past was deprived of any independent significance, but then the present became the goal of history. In the Marxist understanding, the past never completely and absolutely disappears in the present, just as the future is not entirely reducible to the present.

Therefore, in the mental representation of the mature organic whole, there must be three relatively independent spirals of thought, in which the present is reflected, as well as the past and the future, in their relative independence of existence within the present. In the logic of Capital, the surface of capital (commodity-money relations), the essence of capital (the production of surplus value), the phenomenon of capital (the circulation of capital), and the reality of capital (the forms of unity of the productive processes and the circulation of capital) are represented. In addition, there is a study of the surface, essence, and reality of the commodity, as well as a characterisation of the preconditions for the emergence of a new mode of production (quality, quantity, measures of the negation of capital-there is no essence etc., here, since the essence of the new communist mode of production has not yet emerged).

The correct solution to these problems allows one to understand the organic whole, so to speak, at its root. Such understanding is not an end in itself. It is necessary for the conscious, fundamental practical transformation of the object of research, to direct the development of the organic whole.

In the next section, we will attempt to show the possibilities of using the methodology briefly outlined above in the study of human society.

If society is an organic whole (and this will be discussed in the next chapter), then it must be studied using the method of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, that is, beginning with the simplest relation and proceeding to more complex relations,

beginning with the surface and proceeding to the essence, and so on.

Only the study of society through the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete, and in the unity of logical and historical consideration, allows a consistent and deep revelation of the internal connections of the various aspects, the various spheres of the life of society. And this has enormous practical significance, since it serves as the necessary theoretical condition for directing the life of society as a whole.

The next piece of content will be published in future issues.

Notes

[1] Lenin, V.I. "What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", 1894

[2] Engels, F. Review to Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political economy"

[3] As above

[4] Vaziulin, V.A. "The Logic of "Capital" by K. Marx", 1968

[5] Marx K., "Grundrisse, Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy", 1857-61

[6] Translation note: Here we use the word "perception" when referring to sensory data, instead of the word "conception" used in the translation of the Grundrisse, above.

[7] It should be noted that Marx distinguished between the classical bourgeois political economists, who strove for a sober and precise investigation of bourgeois wealth, and the vulgar bourgeois economists, the shameless apologists of bourgeois society.

[8] Russian "закономерность", German "Gesetzmäßigkeit".

The Dialectics of the Historical Process and the Methodology of Its Research

Victor Alexeyevich Vaziulin

Contents

1. Introduction. Posing the Problem
2. The Methodology of Researching the Development of Society
3. Society as an “Organic” Whole
4. The Process of Historical Development of Society
5. In Place of a Conclusion

The previous contents were published in the last issue.

3. Society as an “organic” whole

“What is society, irrespective of its form? The product of man’s interaction upon man.”^[1] Let us consider K. Marx’s definition of society independently of any particular social form.

As we can see, K. Marx writes first about human beings, then about their interaction, and finally about the product of their interaction.

The emphasis on society as a product of human interaction in the quoted passage is no coincidence. K. Marx is commenting on the idealistic views of the petty-bourgeois ideologist Proudhon on history: “[...] finally, he (Proudhon—V. V.) finds that men, taken as individuals, did not know what they were about, were mistaken as to their own course, i.e. that their social development appears at first sight to be something distinct, separate and independent of their individual development. He is unable to explain these facts, and the hypothesis of universal reason made manifest is ready to hand.”^[2] K. Marx proves that social development is not something completely independent of human beings, but that it is the product of human activity. In this context, the emphasis is on the critique of the idealist conception of history.

And if we emphasise the dialectical understanding of society as opposed to the metaphysical? Then we

should focus on the fact that society is both the result (product) and the process of human interaction.

The interaction of aspects, moments, elements, etc. of processes, things, objects is their true “final cause”^[3] (causa finalis.—V. V.). Their internal interaction, interconnection is their true essence. This general dialectical approach also applies to society.

Society is the unity of the external and internal interaction of human beings. External interaction is the interaction of human beings as a natural, living beings; internal interaction is the interaction of human beings as a social beings.

Man is the unity of the natural and the social. If man is considered only as a natural being, then society turns out to be a mechanical aggregate of isolated individuals. If, on the other hand, man is considered only as a social being and his biological nature is ignored, then society is once again assumed, albeit indirectly, implicitly, to be a mechanical aggregate of isolated individuals.

The first tendency found its most developed classical expression in the philosophy of L. Feuerbach, who began with the isolated individual. As early as 1847, K. Marx had already identified this limitation of L. Feuerbach’s views: “Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man [menschliche Wesen = ‘human nature’]. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence is hence obliged: 1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment [Gemüt] regarded by itself, and to presuppose an abstract—isolated—human individual. 2. The essence therefore can by him only be regarded as ‘species’, as an inner ‘dumb’ generality which unites many individuals only in a natural

way.”^[4]

The second tendency in the approach to society found its most profound expression in the philosophy of Hegel. Hegel’s starting point was the universal reason, detached from the particular and the singular. Applied to the question of society and man, this means that Hegel started from society understood in isolation from the human beings who make up society. The human essence within man was torn away from man himself and projected as an absolute—as God.

Both concepts implicitly assumed as their basis a rupture between society and man, between interaction and those who interact, and consequently in both concepts man appeared as an isolated natural being, connected to other human beings only by natural ties. But while in Hegel society, social development, is presented as something detached, fundamentally different from man and transformed into something divine, Feuerbach, who took note of Hegel’s mysticism, Hegel’s detachment of the universal from the particular and the singular (in our case, the detachment of society, social development, from man), essentially abandoned the interpretation of the universal as different from the sum of the singular and directly expressed the idea of man as an isolated individual and of society as a mechanical aggregate [of individuals]^[5].

Both concepts are based, explicitly or implicitly, on a rupture between man and society, between the natural and the social in man as an eternal, insurmountable rift. These positions have their social basis in an antagonistic society where social forces genuinely oppose human beings as autonomous entities—unsubordinated to other human beings and operating as hostile forces against them. The greatest development of this independence and hostility of the social forces towards human beings is achieved in capitalist society. Moreover, while social forces are only hostile to the ruling capitalist class to a certain degree (through threats of crises, bankruptcy, etc.),

they confront the working class as fundamentally and irreconcilably hostile.

Both concepts emerge from the world of private property. Private property forces the owner to treat all other human beings as means and to see himself as something self-sufficient, as the centre, as the end-goal. All other human beings, from the private owner’s point of view, appear as external to him.

A consistent dialectical understanding of society and man, of the natural and the social in man, was only achieved by the founders of Marxism, for they stood on a fundamentally different social position, on the position of the working class, which, by virtue of its real, material position and its role in production and society, is destined to destroy the exploitation of man by man, the rupture of the social forces from man, their hostility to man, the rift between society and man, to abolish private property, to socialise property, to subordinate the social forces to man. Only from this point of view could it become clear that the social forces hostile to man are created by man himself under certain objective conditions, that man’s hostility to man, the idea of man as an isolated being, hostile or indifferent to other human beings, that all this is not eternal. Marxism shows and scientifically substantiates the ways and means of fundamentally transforming such a society.

In view of the above, let us try to answer the question: what is the starting point in the study of society: the individual or society itself?

From the above it follows that one cannot begin from the individual, isolated from society, for then all that is social in man disappears, and he appears only as an animal, as a natural being, connected with other similar beings only by natural ties; the specificity of the social, the essence of man, falls out of sight and becomes inexplicable; but one cannot begin from society, taken in its detachment from the individual, for then society, social development, appears as a divine, supernatural, inexplicable force. If one begins from man isolated from society, and

from society as an external and superhuman force, then the rupture between them does not disappear and the explanation of society remains impossible. The explanation of society can only be sought by understanding it as the interaction of human beings.

It would seem—if one starts from the simple negation of the approaches listed in the previous paragraph—that one should stop at the fact that, since man as man exists only in society, and society is the product of the interaction of human beings and, consequently, does not exist without the human beings who constitute it, i.e., if man and society exist only in their mutual conditionality, then one must simultaneously explain the first by the second and the second by the first. However, the simple negation of the approaches listed in the previous paragraph does not make it possible to resolve the question of man and society completely and correctly.

One cannot separate human beings from their interaction, but neither can one absolutely identify human beings with their interaction. The dialectical solution to the question lies in the fact that human beings and their interaction are simultaneously identical and different.

It is precisely for this reason that it does not matter where one begins: with human beings or with the product of their interaction.

Marxist literature currently gives two typical answers. Some argue that Marxism has always taken the “empirical individual” as its starting point, while others argue that the starting point in Marxism can only be society. We believe that neither of these views can be fully accepted. These different positions are expressed, for example: the first—in the interesting book by F. Tökei, “Towards a Theory of Social Formation” (Moscow, 1975), the second—in the detailed epilogue to his book, written by V. Zh. Kelle.

Thus, F. Tökei essentially expresses the view that the classics of Marxism-Leninism always begin from the “empirical individual” and illustrates this with quotations from the works of K. Marx and F. Engels.

However, he does not always consider the context in which the quotations he cites are used. F. Tökei does not reveal the point of his insistence on beginning with the “empirical, concrete individual”, nor does he analyse the relationship between the individual and society from this position. In essence, therefore, it remains largely unclear how this position differs from Feuerbach’s.

The decisive arguments against this view are well formulated by V. Zh. Kelle:

“K. Marx and F. Engels, as historical materialists, always started with historical reality and did not form a priori constructions. ‘To begin with the real’, according to Marx, means to proceed from the ‘totality of all social relations’ which constitute the ‘essence of man’, to single out in them the main, determining—material relations, to show the conditionality of the latter to the development of the productive forces, and so on. Therefore, outside the analysis of social relations, we cannot say anything concrete either about the ‘empirical individuals’ themselves or about the nature and direction of their activity: The ‘empirical individual’ as such, is the starting point for positivist sociology, which is concerned with describing the ‘behaviour’ of this individual but only skims the surface of the phenomena. The path of Marxist analysis is therefore from society to man. And this is the main principle that the founders of Marxism-Leninism themselves have repeatedly and quite unambiguously stated”^[6].

The essence of the arguments is that since the essence of man is the “totality of all social relations”, outside of society, “concrete individuals” have no social nature and nothing can be said about them as social individuals, while the choice of the “empirical individual” as the starting point of positivist sociology leads to only scratching the surface. Therefore, one should start from society, not from the “concrete individual”.

If we reveal the dialectical-logical basis of this reasoning, it can be expressed as follows: in studying

the interaction of some elements, aspects, which form a system, one should begin with the interaction, with the essence, and from there proceed to the consideration of the elements, aspects, to the surface; this is necessary because the essence, the interaction, is the main, determining factor for understanding the elements, aspects as elements, aspects precisely of this system, this interaction. Thus, it is implicitly (perhaps unconsciously) assumed that Marxism, in its understanding of society, necessarily begins from the essence to the surface, whereas if the starting point is the surface, this inevitably leads to skimming the surface, to the inability to understand, to explain the essence (hence the reference to positivist sociology). The movement from the surface to the essence is thus essentially excluded from Marxism.

In the first chapter we already noted that the movement of knowledge is from the surface to the essence and from the essence to the surface (more precisely, to the phenomenon and to reality). These opposite movements of cognition always occur simultaneously, but at the same time, in certain stages of cognition, the movement from the surface to the essence first dominates, determining the main character of the stage of cognition, and then from the essence to the surface.

The opposing views on the starting point of the study of society, as expressed in contemporary Marxist literature, implicitly contain the dilemma: either the only path of cognition is from the surface to the essence, or the only path of cognition is from the essence to the surface.

The proponents of the second part of the dilemma admit, consciously or unconsciously, that the path of knowledge from the surface to the essence is inseparable from the bourgeois worldview, particularly from the specificity of Feuerbachianism and the specificity of the approach of bourgeois political economy, especially of the 17th century. And they are right in the sense that the path of knowledge from the surface to the essence, isolated from the

opposite path, inevitably leads to positivism, etc., and is typical of bourgeois ideology. But the path of cognition from essence to surface, isolated from the opposite path, leads to idealism and metaphysics. In its most developed form, this latter approach was carried out by Hegel.

The specificity of Marxism also consisted in the fact that K. Marx and F. Engels did not simply reject the views of Hegel and Feuerbach, and did not simply combine Feuerbachianism and Hegelianism in a mechanical way, but reworked the views of Feuerbach and Hegel, revealing the rational moments in them.

In *Capital*, this approach was put into practice in relation to the task of researching the development of the capitalist economy.

The logic at work in the representation of the capitalist economy in *Capital* is, in its universal moments, applicable to the representation of society.

Indeed, if we compare the definition of society given by Marx in his letter to P.V. Annenkov (the quote was given at the beginning of this chapter) with the definition of capitalist wealth in *Capital*, we will see that there is more than an outward logical similarity between them.

“The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” (in the German text: ‘Warensammlung,’ i.e., in the exact translation, “collection of commodities.”—V. V.), its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.”^[7] The collection, the accumulation of commodities, is the interaction of commodities as it appears on the surface, at first sight. K. Marx goes on to show that the commodity, as the elementary form of capitalist wealth, does not exist as a commodity in isolation from other commodities; it becomes a commodity only in interaction with other commodities, and commodity relations, having become dominant and universal in society, are capitalist relations.

Thus, the elementary form of capitalist wealth

is the individual commodity; in society as such, taken independently of any form, the element is the individual person; capitalist wealth is formed by the interaction of commodities (which on the surface appear merely as a simple collection, an accumulation of commodities), human society [is formed]^[8] by the interaction of human beings.

In both cases there is an interaction of elements; in the first case of commodities, in the second of human beings.

It follows that the logic of *Capital*, insofar as it is the logic of representing the interaction of elements, aspects, is fully applicable to the consideration of society as such.

Before K. Marx, the representation of capitalist wealth was faced with the same question as the representation of society. Where to begin? With the commodity or with capital? The commodity as an element of capitalist wealth is always a capitalist commodity: isolated from capital, the commodity is no longer a commodity of capitalist society, it is no longer an element of capitalist wealth. But at the same time, capital is a collection of commodities. There is a circle: there is no capital without commodities, but there are no commodities as elements of capitalist wealth without capital; in capitalist society, capital and commodity mutually condition each other. To understand what a capitalist commodity is, one must first understand what capital is, but to understand what capital is, one must first understand what a capitalist commodity is.

We encounter a similar situation when we consider society as such. To understand human beings as human beings, and not as animals, one must understand society, social relations. But to understand society, social relations, one must understand human beings, the product of the interaction of which is society.

This difficulty arises whenever it is necessary to represent the interaction of aspects, elements. For an element, insofar as it is an element precisely of

this interaction, is determined in its specificity by this interaction. It is therefore necessary, first, to understand this interaction itself. But on the other hand, interaction is the interaction of elements, and one cannot understand interaction without first understanding the parts that are interacting.

A contradictory situation arises: a necessary condition for understanding the one, is the prior understanding of the other, and the understanding of the other is possible only with the prior understanding of the first.

Any given interaction has a certain stability at a given time and can therefore be considered from the point of view of its functionality. At the same time, every interaction is a historical process; it changes over time.

It is expedient to consider first how the interaction of elements (elements can be goods, human beings, etc.) is represented as a functional interaction, i.e. in the purely logical aspect, and then to shift to the consideration of interaction as a historical process. A full justification of the legitimacy of this precisely, and no other representation of interaction, can only be given by representing interaction in the unity of its functional and historical development.

In the most general terms, what is the course of K. Marx's thought in considering interaction as functional interaction? K. Marx begins his consideration of capital in *Capital* with the commodity, not with capital. He moves from commodity to capital, from the elements to their interaction.

On the other hand, if one accepts the view that in the analysis of society, Marxism moves from society to man, to the individual, and not the other way round, then one would expect K. Marx to have begun his consideration of capitalist wealth in *Capital* with capital and proceeded from capital to the commodity. After all, to explain the commodity as an element of capitalist wealth, is first and foremost to explain capital.

As the text of *Capital* progresses, it becomes

increasingly clear that the commodity is the correct starting point for considering capital, both logically and historically.

K. Marx begins his characterisation of capital with the commodity and moves on to capital, or more precisely to the representation of the production of surplus value. This is the main path of K. Marx's thought in the first volume of *Capital*. In the second volume of *Capital*, K. Marx returns, as it were, from capital to the commodity, but if in the first path he emphasised in the commodity that it was a capitalist commodity, in the second path it is established that it is a capitalist commodity, that capital manifests itself in the commodity. In the third volume of *Capital*, K. Marx reveals the forms of unity of the essence of capital (the production of surplus value) and the manifestation of capital (the circulation of capital).

Let us try to characterise, in the most general terms, the logic of the representation of society as such.

The starting point of the representation of society as such, should be man, but man in his immediate givenness. The connection between man and society will initially appear only as immediately given in the individual human being.

How is man given when we consider him directly?

First, man appears as a living being, forced to maintain his life and therefore forced to satisfy his needs for food, clothing, shelter and the continuation of his species.

Of course, all these needs are by no means entirely identical with the needs of animals; they already contain human specificity. But as long as man is only taken at face value, and it is not explained how that which is specifically human in man emerges, develops and is "produced", what is inherent in man precisely as a man, and what is inherent in him as a mere living being, cannot be distinguished from each other and do not become the subject of special consideration.

"Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like.

They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life." wrote K. Marx and F. Engels in *The German Ideology*.^[9]

The transition to the consideration of labour, the production of the means of subsistence, is the transition to the consideration of the essence of society.

The productive relation of man to nature includes human need, perceived as an end, the object of purposeful action, the means of action, and the purposeful action itself. The purposeful productive action of man on nature is labour.

In the simplest case, labour and production are identical (although, as K. Marx shows in *Capital*, this is an identity with a difference). Labour in general, as specifically human labour, is classically and clearly defined by K. Marx in *Capital*.

Since the development of labour and production, takes place in order to satisfy the physical needs of human beings, the development of labour (and production) is an external necessity.

The necessity of the development of labour (and production), which is internal, is generated by labour (and production) itself. From the point of view of internal necessity, the development of labour (and production) is a self-movement.

What, then, is the internal source of the development of labour? It must lie in the specific nature and interaction of the necessary components of labour in general.

Labour as self-development, as an end in itself, is carried out to satisfy needs, but these are needs "internal" to labour, needs of labour itself. The internal needs of the labour process are needs generated by the labour process itself, and the improvement of the labour process presupposes knowledge of the object, the means, the result of

labour, it presupposes creativity. Thus, the internal need for the development of labour, that is, the need for labour, is multifaceted: it is the need to acquire knowledge, the need for creativity, the need to improve the labour process, and so on.

The consideration of the labour process brings us back to man. But now the individual is seen through the prism of the labour process as self-development, through the prism of the essence. Now it is not only the individual that is fixed, but the qualities of the individual as a personality. Personality is the individual insofar as the social essence is accumulated in him, or the individual as the manifestation of the social essence^[10].

So far, we have discussed the productive relationship of the individual to nature, taken in itself. Man, however, does not engage in labour and produce in isolation from other people, but in interaction with other people, in society. The social character of labour is brought to life both by external necessity, by factors external to labour, and by internal necessity, by internal connections and relations within the labour process.

As labour develops, the internal factors related to the labour process, which determine the social character of labour, play an increasingly important role. In developed labour, external factors persist, although they are not the most important ones.

What, then, are the internal factors of the labour process that determine its social character? These are different moments of the labour process in general, which have become the particular activity of different human beings. For example, the formulation of labour objectives is carried out by some human beings, their execution by others, and the control of their execution by still others, and so on. In turn, the formulation of objectives can be divided into a number of interrelated moments (the labour of the scientist, the labour of the designer, the labour of the engineer, etc.), and the same applies to the execution. In this case, different human beings or

different groups of human beings carry out different moments of a single labour process. Here, different human beings act as carriers of different moments of the labour process. The labour process itself, the internal relation of its moments, determines the productive relation of a collective of human beings towards nature (ultimately of the whole of society, if the economy of the whole of society becomes an internally unified whole). Human beings, insofar as they carry out different moments of a single labour process, enter into technical relations with one another.

Man, ultimately enters into a productive relationship with nature, first and foremost in order to satisfy the needs conditioned by his bodily organisation.

The relations between human beings, from the point of view of the satisfaction of physical needs, are direct relations of the distribution of the products of labour, of production, among human beings. What determines the distribution of the products of labour, of production? The distribution in the labour process. The relations between human beings in the distribution of the products of labour, of production, and those relations in production itself which lead to the distribution of products, are relations of production.

Technique and technical relations are the means in the process of human transformation of nature. Consequently, human beings, as moments of technical relations, act as means, not as the end of production. The consideration of relations of production, on the other hand, is the consideration of the objective relations of human beings in production from the point of view of the possibilities of satisfying the material needs of human beings, i.e. from the point of view of the objectives of the transformation of nature.

Thus, we started from the fact of the bodily organisation of individuals and the physical needs that result from it, then moved on to production as a means of satisfying physical needs, and finally

returned, as it were, to the starting point. But now we are no longer talking about the physical needs of man as a particular living being, but about the relations of individuals to each other in terms of their physical needs, insofar as these relations are conditioned by production as a means of satisfying them. It is only at this stage of the movement of thought that the need to distinguish not only the category of “relations of production” but also the category of “productive forces” becomes fully apparent.

The category “productive forces” encompasses not only the instrumental relation to nature as such (hence not just technical relations), nor the relation to nature in itself.

What is reflected in the category of productive forces—and this is very important—is the productive relation to nature, not in isolation from social relations of production, but in internal connection with them.

From what has been said, it follows that the category of relations of production cannot be distinguished if cognition does not penetrate into the internal connection between production and needs, production and consumption, production and distribution, and exchange. If only an external connection is established between production and needs/consumption—where production serves merely as a means for consumption, for satisfying needs—then the production relations cannot be revealed in their essential character, for it is precisely within them that the unity of both moments is realised. If distribution is separated from production, then although the relations of production appear explicitly in the distribution of the products of production, they cannot be understood as conditioned by production itself, and consequently the relations of production in production itself disappear, and the distribution of products appears arbitrary.

Based on the consideration of productive forces and relations of production, there is, as it were, a return to the starting point, to the individual. But now the individual appears as a personality and the relations between individuals as personal relations.

Thus, the starting point of consideration is man as he is immediately given, i.e. man as a living being, forced to maintain his physical existence, to satisfy his physical needs and to perpetuate his species. The transition to the characterisation of labour, the production of means of subsistence, is the transition to the consideration of the essence, the internal interaction of human beings. Returning then to individuals, we see that they now appear, enriched by internal, essential interrelations, as personalities, and their relations as personal relations.

All other social relations, e.g. moral, aesthetic, etc., turn out to be forms of the relations of human beings as personalities, personal relations.

We shall confine ourselves to these brief remarks on the consideration of the interrelation of the aspects of society as a functioning “organic” whole, for our task is not to consider society systematically as an organic whole, but to show the possibility and necessity of such consideration.

Notes

[1] Letter from K. Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov, December 28, 1846

[2] As above.

[3] Translator’s note: The author refers to the Aristotelian definition of the end, purpose or final “cause” (τέλος, télos) as that for the sake of which a thing is done.

[4] K. Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, 1845

[5] Translator’s note.

[6] V. Zh. Kelle. Afterword to the book by F. Tökei “Towards a Theory of Social Formations”, 1975, p. 264-265.

[7] K. Marx. Capital Volume One, Part I: Commodities and Money, 1867

[8] Translator’s note

[9] K. Marx. The German Ideology. 1845

[10] In our opinion, this should be the basis for the distinction between the personality and the individual. A person cannot consider himself to be a true personality as long as their primary goal is only the maintenance of their own physical existence and reproductive relationships.

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The earlier installments of this article were published in previous issues.

4. The Process of the Historical Development of Society

The process of development can be considered from the point of view of the simultaneous givenness of its moments [sites, parts] (logical aspect) and from the point of view of the unfolding of development over time (historical aspect). In this section, we will focus on characterising the development of society over time.

The discovery by K. Marx and F. Engels of the materialist understanding of history made it possible to understand history as a natural-historical process, as a process that occurs due to necessity, in a law-governed way, and yet is realised through the activity of people who have freedom of choice, freedom of will (at different stages of historical development, the nature and degree of freedom vary).

To understand the process of historical development, it is necessary to define its change over time, and if development is law-governed, then the change must occur in some necessary direction. This law-governed

development does not exclude the activity of people as conscious, thinking beings; on the contrary, the historical development of society represents the resultant, formed from the activity of masses of people. However, the activity of people is ultimately carried out to maintain their own physical existence and that of their kind under certain objective, initially predominantly natural conditions. And for this reason alone, the historical development of society, i.e., the historical interactions of people, cannot occur purely arbitrarily.

The history of society cannot be free from accidents, zigzags, interruptions, etc. But still, if we take a sufficiently long period (the length of such a period varies depending on specific conditions), a direction of development will be revealed, making its way through all the accidents, zigzags, interruptions, etc.

The characterisation of any historical process of development means, first and foremost, the consideration of its general direction, therefore including the beginning of the process, the stages it passes through, as well as the ‘mechanisms’ of transition from one stage to another, the specificity, continuity, and direction of the process of development.

It is necessary to specifically emphasise that, by asserting the existence of a direction of development, we note the main direction of development. In doing that, we are abstracting from the fact that, along with the main direction, there may exist other, dead-end directions of development, and that interaction may occur between them and the main direction.

Society is, as already noted above, an ‘organic’ whole, passing in its ascending, progressive development through a series of stages, levels, and phases.

The real existing history of society is not the process of the development of an 'organic' whole in a 'pure' form. However, to understand the full complexity of the historical development of society, it is necessary to first isolate in a 'pure' form the main direction of the development of society and only then introduce complicating factors into the field of consideration.

Society, the social form of motion, is qualitatively distinct from the biological form of motion, but at the same time, society arises from nature and most immediately from the biological form of motion.

Consequently, if society is an 'organic' whole, then the history of society must be divided into stages, phases, which every 'organic' whole passes through in its development:

1. The formation of the historical preconditions of society, the formation of the social within the biological, and generally within the natural. At this stage, the preconditions for the emergence of society appear, but society itself does not yet exist.

2. The primary emergence of society.

3. The formation of society. The process through which the emerging society transforms the inherited natural basis is underway.

4. The maturity of society. The process of transformation of the inherited natural basis is completed. This substantially transformed natural basis is now included as a moment of the process of the development of society.

At the stage of the formation of the historical preconditions of society, natural laws reign supreme. The source of development here must be sought in the development of nature. At the stage of the primary emergence of society, a fundamentally new source of development is formed and begins to operate.

With the emergence of humanity, social factors became the main drivers of development, rather than natural ones. It is true that the natural factors, the natural basis, are only beginning to be transformed by the new process. At the stage of the formation of society, the transformation of the natural basis

continues, but to one degree or another, the natural basis still remains untransformed, and, therefore, the new essence, although it is the main, leading factor of development, does not yet dominate in the sense that the inherited process, the natural basis, has not been completely transformed.

At the stage of maturity, the social factor becomes not only leading but also dominant.

Thus, at the first stage, the source of development lies within nature; at the second stage, a social source of development arises, which immediately becomes leading. Thanks to the emergence of this fundamentally new factor and as its manifestation, an interaction between it and the natural factor arises. The interaction of the social and natural factors dominates, with the social factor being primary. At the third stage, the emerging social factor continues to be the leading, main factor. At the fourth stage, the social factor completely subjugates the natural factor, and only at this stage does it exclusively dominate, and thus only now does the self-movement, self-development of society, the interaction of people as an end in itself, the development of the essence of man as an end in itself, dominate exclusively.

The stage of the formation of the historical preconditions of human society begins with the existence of the ape-like ancestors of man. At this stage, due to purely natural activities (the interaction of the organism and the surrounding natural environment), the preconditions for the transition to the next stage are created, preconditions that are also natural in character.

The transition to the stage of the primary emergence of man occurs due to purely natural influences: it was the change in the surrounding natural environment (the thinning of forests, cooling, the reduction of opportunities for gathering food, etc.) that led to the fact that the ape-like ancestors of man began the transition from an arboreal to a terrestrial way of life and to the use of natural objects as means, tools for obtaining food, protection, etc. The

transition to the use of natural objects as tools was thus a continuation of purely natural development. But natural development included in the sphere of its activity such a natural factor that contained fundamentally new potentials for development, different from natural development. The transition to the use of tools, means of labour, opened the way to the creation of objects that do not exist in nature as such. As the use of natural objects as tools and means of labour became systematic, so too did the purposeful modification of the tools and means of labour themselves, i.e. there was a transition to the gradual production of tools, means of labour.

When does the stage of the primary emergence of man as a social being end? In our opinion, it is when the production of the products of labour becomes constant, regular.

Initially, production emerges as the production of tools for subsistence. Gatherers, hunters, and fishers do not engage in the regular production of the goods they consume.

Only with the emergence of animal husbandry and agriculture do human beings move to the regular, constant production of products of labour that serve as objects for satisfying the physical needs of man. It was then that the production of tools ceased to be primarily about subsistence and became about producing tools for production itself.

The emergence of man also meant a fundamental change in the relationship to nature: from satisfying physical needs with the help of objects found in nature in a ready-made form to the production of objects for consumption, to the purposeful alteration of some natural objects with the help of other objects used as means of alteration.

A fundamental change in the interaction of a living being with nature is, as in any interaction, a fundamental change in both interacting sides. The transformation of the ape into a new type of living being took place with the development of labour activity and was for the most part completed with

the formation of the components of labour: objects of labour, means of labour, purposeful actions, and products of labour. In turn, the formation of these components took shape when the foraging/extraction of ready-made objects of nature became the main source of subsistence for human beings and when the production of tools for foraging became constant. All the components of labour listed above are already present in the production of tools for foraging. It was at this time that the biological type of modern man was formed.

Above, we spoke of the primary emergence of a productive relation with nature. But the process of the primary emergence of this relation was also the process of the primary emergence of relations of production.

When foraging for consumable objects is the main source of subsistence, the use and distribution of the foraged objects are in general not differentiated from each other. What is gathered by the collective is consumed together.

In our opinion, if ready-made natural objects are used as tools, there is generally no social division between use and distribution, between consumption and production.

The social division between use and distribution, and between consumption and production, is only just beginning to emerge. As long as we are dealing with a society of 'foragers,' consumption and use, on the one hand, and the distribution of the results and tools of foraging, on the other, exist predominantly in an undifferentiated form. Relations of production only begin to emerge as relatively independent, primarily in the production of tools for foraging.

The primary emergence of relations of production as relatively independent can only be completed with the transition to actual production of objects for consumption and to the production of tools for production.

Natural factors transformed the troop of apes into human society. But that's not all. From the very

beginning of this transition, the main driving force behind development was the use of tools and the emergence of labour.

In our opinion, it is impossible to accept the view that, during a period of predominantly appropriating ready-made natural products, the economy and economic relations did not play a decisive role.

At the same time, however, any discussion about the decisive role of the economy or tribal relations should be taken *cum grano salis*.

Throughout the entire stage of the primary emergence of society, including the primitive stage and the lowest stage of barbarism, the primary emergence of the relations of production and the economy also takes place. This means that relations of production are already beginning to diverge from natural connections, although they still exist as indivisible from them. This means that relations of production have not yet completely transformed natural ties. In this sense, they do not yet dominate. But it is precisely the relations of production that serve as the leading factor of development during this era and, in this sense, the decisive factor.

Relations of production are only just emerging, and their content is largely determined by the weakness of the emerging productive forces, i.e. it is determined negatively. Since relations of production are not yet completely distinct from natural relations, relations of production merge with clan/tribe relations. Clan relations serve simultaneously as relations of production.

As production relations have become distinct from natural relations, they do not merge with clan relations, rather, they exist as a unique form of communal relations of production.

In primitive society, relations of production are predominantly merged with the natural relations of human beings to each other and to the conditions of production. 'Property' thus originally means no more than a human being's relation to his natural conditions of production as belonging to him, as his,

as presupposed along with his own being; relations to them as natural presuppositions of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body. He actually does not relate to his conditions of production, but rather has a double existence, both subjectively as he himself, and objectively in these natural non-organic conditions of his existence.'^[1] The absence of a relation between man and his conditions of production means that property exists inseparably from the natural connection, natural relations.^[2] This is because man himself represents the subjective existence of natural conditions.

Thus, primitive communal property existed to a large extent merged with the natural relations of human beings to each other and to the conditions of production.

To one degree or another, the merging of relations of production with natural relations is indispensable to any community. This merging is rooted in the essence of all communities, regardless of their various forms.

At the stage of the primary emergence of man, society exists in the form of separate collectives, each representing society as a whole. The primary necessity for every collective is to provide its members with the minimum means necessary to sustain life and satisfy the minimum physical needs that are indispensable for life. This emerging mode of production exists as subordinate to this necessity, and its relatively independent development has only just begun. At the same time, from the outset, although the mode of production has been in service to the provision of the minimum means of subsistence, it has been the leading factor in development. However, influence of this factor still depends to a considerable extent on chance and specific natural conditions. Consequently, if natural conditions are sufficiently abundant to satisfy primitive needs, the development of the mode of production may stagnate. The primitive collective is, in a sense, a society of predominantly primitive consumers. Of course, overly harsh natural conditions also hinder the emergence of the mode of production.

The activation of the emerging mode of production,

as the leading factor of development, only occurs when there is a certain degree of 'pressure' from the surrounding conditions on human beings. At this stage, natural conditions and natural human connections (connections related to reproduction, changes in population size due to natural conditions) remain predominant factors but cease to be the leading factors of development.

The third stage is the formation of human society. At this stage, the emerging mode of production of material goods is formed, transforming the inherited natural basis. Of course, its primary emergence was simultaneously a certain transformation of the natural basis. At the previous stage, the basic components of labour, productive forces, and relations of production emerged. So, what exactly did the development of the mode of material production and the reshaping of inherited natural conditions involve during this formative period?

Natural connections and conditions continue to prevail during the formation of society. However, now the activity of the mode of production as the leading factor in the development of society has ceased to depend on random circumstances and has become predominantly necessary. In the process of formation, the mode of production becomes not only the necessary leading factor in development, but also the unchallenged dominant one.

Let us consider in more detail the process of the formation of society from the point of view of the development of the productive forces. The period of the formation of the productive forces begins from the stage when the level of the productive forces allows for the production of a constant surplus beyond what is absolutely necessary for physical survival and continues until the level at which an abundance of material goods can be produced. The formation of the productive forces begins after the basic components of the productive forces (human beings, means of production) first emerge. It consists, first and foremost, in the formation of the social character of labour. Initially, the social character of labour is generally dictated by the overall weakness,

underdevelopment and primitive nature of the productive forces, i.e. it is a consequence of the insufficient development of the productive forces. The formation of the social character of labour enters its final stage when processes in which different people serve as moments of a single productive process begin to predominate in production. The formation of the social character of production is completed when the entire production process of society becomes internally unified.

The formation of the productive forces is also the transformation of the inherited natural basis and its transformation into a subordinate moment of the movement of the productive forces. Already at the stage of the primary emergence of man as a social being, the production of tools (for foraging/extraction) becomes established. The production of tools (for foraging/extraction) in providing people with the means for subsistence plays, as does the entire mode of production, a leading role in development, but it by no means predominates in this process. At the stage of the formation of society, the use of tools (actually now tools of production itself, not of foraging/extraction) found in nature in a ready-made form still predominates. At this stage, the transition from the predominance of naturally emerging tools of production to the predominance of produced tools of production takes place. At the same stage, the transition from the predominant use of objects of labour found in nature in a ready-made form to the predominant use of artificial objects of labour, created with predetermined properties, takes place. Humanity at this stage of the development of the productive forces moves to the purposeful impact on all natural conditions on earth, on the entire surrounding earthly natural environment. Finally, the formation of the productive forces includes the formation of man as a productive force. All the transformations listed above mean the penetration into the essence of natural processes, and consequently, presuppose the transition from the empirical level of the development of knowledge to the theoretical, requiring a properly

scientific approach to reality. The formation of man as a productive force is his transformation from an empirically acting individual into an individual armed with theory.

The formation of society from the point of view of the development of the relations of production takes place, ultimately, under the determining influence of the forming productive forces. But, at the same time, the formation of the relations of production is a relatively independent process.

The development of the relations of production at the stage of the formation of human society occurs in a contradictory way. On the one hand, throughout the entire stage, although to varying degrees and in variously modified forms, the relation of man to his natural conditions of production 'as presupposed along with his own being; relations to them as natural presuppositions of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body'^[3], the direct relation of man to the conditions of production, is preserved. (This side is preserved to a certain extent even under capitalism.) On the other hand, a rift between man and the conditions of production is formed and develops; private property and antagonistic classes emerge and develop.

The first process changes and disappears as human society develops, while the second grows, becomes dominant, and ultimately becomes dominant at the end of the development process.

The basis for preserving, to one degree or another, in one form or another, the direct relation of man to the conditions of production is that the share and role of naturally occurring tools and objects of labour found in nature in ready-made form is still significant, and that man is still enslaved by the activity of natural forces.

The basis for the emergence and growth of the rift between man and the conditions of production is the totality of a number of features of the development of the productive forces. Firstly, it is the transition to the predominance of produced tools of labour, to the predominance of produced objects of labour, to the decisive purposeful impact of man on the

entire surrounding environment. Thus, the direct relationship between man and the natural conditions of production becomes mediated. Secondly, this mediated relation manifests as a rift. The productive forces at the stage of formation are sufficient to produce a constant surplus of means of subsistence beyond what is absolutely necessary to maintain the physical existence of individuals, but insufficient for the constant and total satisfaction of the physical needs of all members of society, which leads to the struggle of people with each other over material goods, to the formation of classes and private property. In addition, the predominance of individually operated tools of labour, the presence of the social character of labour, mainly as an external necessity, also leads to the emergence of private property.

What is the source of development at the stage of the formation of human society? The source of the development of society lies primarily in the mode of production, i.e., in the unity of productive forces and production relations. However, at this stage, the internal source, the source of self-development of society, is only just forming. The mode of production already plays the role of the leading factor of development, and it is precisely due to its activity that societal progress occurs at the stage of formation. At the same time, society still depends to a significant extent on natural conditions, which can either facilitate the progress of society (but cannot define its progress) or hinder the development of society. Therefore, the formation of the mode of production itself can begin and proceed under specific natural conditions.

Socio-economic formations characterised by class antagonism, represent various stages of the process of the formation of society. The entire history of humanity up to communism is a process of the maturation of society. When can we speak of a mature society?

A truly mature society is one in which the transformation of the natural basis, i.e., the foundation from which society emerged, has been completed. The stage of maturity of any given process of development

is the negation of the negation. Applied to society, this means that initially, there exists predominantly an immediate unity of society and man with nature (the distinction between them is not brought to the fore). Then, the transformation of nature and natural ties intensifies, and the rift between society and nature, the establishment of dominance over nature, begins to come to the fore. At the stage of maturity, there is a type of return to the starting point, to unity with nature, preserving the achievements of the first negation. The unity of society and nature at the stage of maturity of human society is mediated by the transformation of the entire earthly nature. However, here the rift between man and nature disappears, as does man's hostility towards the forces of nature, the one-sided struggle to become the master of nature, and the predatory attitude towards it, etc.

The productive forces of a mature society are quantitatively developed to the extent that they can deliver an abundance of material goods. The maturity of productive forces is also characterised by the fact that the production of society becomes an internally unified productive process; that the means of production are themselves created by production; and that man, as a component of the productive forces, is equipped with science, and the productive forces become the embodiment of science. The maturity of the productive forces also means the predominance of creative, meaningful, optimally sustained labour, which is impossible without developed automated production. In turn, the adequate basis for automated production is the production of automata by automata. The product of purposeful transformation at this stage of maturity is not only the means and objects of labour, not only labour itself, but all natural conditions on earth. All natural conditions on earth become a unified, purposefully transformed complex. This is followed by the purposeful, comprehensive exploration of near-Earth space.

The relations of production at the stage of maturity of society are no longer communal/tribal or relations of private property, but relations of public ownership,

i.e., social appropriation. The goal of society becomes not the provision of a minimum of material goods according to sex, age, and individual characteristics, as in primitive society, nor the acquisition of private property. It would be erroneous to consider the main goal of a mature society to be the provision of all members of society with an abundance of material goods. The main objective becomes the development, self-development of people as individuals. At the stage of the maturity of society, the relationship between productive forces and relations of production changes, as does the entire structure of society. A special study of these changes is the subject of separate research.

Socialism is a stage of maturity of society in which social ownership of the means of production has become the leading and determining factor of the development of society, but in which the limitations of previous development of society have not yet been fully overcome.

The communist phase of the development of the new society is, in fact, the development of the new society on its own foundation.

Notes

[1] K. Marx, *Grundrisse: Notebook IV/V—The Chapter on Capital*, Continuation of “Forms which precede capitalist production”, 1858

[2] This position should not be taken as absolute. Man cannot be completely unrelated to his conditions of production.

[3] K. Marx, *Grundrisse: Notebook IV/V—The Chapter on Capital*, Continuation of “Forms which precede capitalist production”, 1858

The Dialectics of the Historical Process and the Methodology of Its Research

Victor Alexeyevich Vaziulin

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2. The Methodology of Researching the Development of Society
3. Society as an “Organic” Whole
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The earlier installments of this article were published in previous issues.

5. IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

The transformation of world history into general history, beginning with the development of large-scale industry already under capitalism and fully realised only in the communist formation, is the maturation of society as an ‘organic’ whole. In the field of methodology for researching society, this necessitates an increasing shift in emphasis towards the use of the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. For it is this method that predominates in the representation of a mature ‘organic’ whole.

Society as a mature ‘organic’ whole is the true history of humanity, as opposed to its prehistory. This is the communist formation. Therefore, to consider society as an ‘organic’ whole through the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, that is, through the logical method, means to characterise the communist formation in its internal (as well as external) interconnections, the interaction of its aspects, in its process of development.

It is no coincidence, then, that our attempt to pres-

ent society as an ‘organic’ whole simultaneously turns out to be a characterisation of the communist formation. For example, we began by examining human needs, conditioned by their bodily organisation, then moved on to characterising production, after which we returned to the consideration of the individual with his needs, but now the individual appeared as someone who has a productive relation to nature and occupies a certain place in the relations of production. In other words, we arrived at the concept of a human being not merely as an individual, but also as a personality. A human being as a personality is an individual in whom the social is individually refracted, for whom the maintenance of physical existence is subordinate compared to the need for self-development, primarily as a social being, as a personality. (The development of man as an individual turns out to be indispensable although, in general, [it remains] a subordinate moment of his self-development as a personality.) Moreover, the self-development of each [individual] as a personality is a necessary condition for the self-development of all other human beings as personalities, and vice versa.

Thus, in characterising society as an ‘organic’ whole, we have come to discuss, in essence, the main goal of the communist formation. The development of an approach to society as an ‘organic’ whole, in other words, the development of a holistic approach to society, is extremely relevant both for the study of the entire communist formation and for the practice of socialist construction. For such an approach makes it possible to explain various social processes and phenomena more deeply and serves as a meth-

odological basis for improving the management of the development of socialist society. Planning and managing the development of socialist society as a whole necessarily presupposes knowledge of all aspects and spheres of social life in their interconnections, interactions, functions, and development, and thus a holistic theoretical consideration of social development.

Communism (including socialism as its first phase) is the true history of humanity as the result of development, as the negation of the negation of preceding history.

If we highlight the main direction of development, the history of humanity unfolds in a spiral.

The starting point of history was the formation of the historical preconditions for the emergence of humanity within nature, and the primary emergence of humanity. Here, exists an immediate unity of the emerging human being, society, and nature (although this is an identity, a unity with difference).

Initially, objects for consumption given by nature in a ready-made form are appropriated, and tools for their extraction and gathering are created. Objects for consumption are mainly foraged, gathered, and not produced. At the same time, humans begin to produce tools for foraging and gathering. But predominantly, they still use the results of natural processes occurring without their intervention, i.e., natural processes themselves.

The links between individuals are also predominantly natural, formed naturally. The emerging production only makes these links more stable, i.e., leads to the formation of collectives in which individuals relate to each other in terms of reproduction. Relations of production initially form in the shape of clan relations, but they are hardly entirely reducible to them. In other words, relations of production appear in the form of natural, innate relations and to some extent exist alongside them.

As the production of objects for consumption becomes regular and constant^[1], the difference

between relations regarding reproduction and relations of production grows, and thus, between the clan and the community. In this way, the community increasingly comes to the fore compared to the clan. In the difference between the clan and the community, the differences between natural links and the relations of production are manifested. However, neither clan ties are purely natural links (they are natural ties crystallising, becoming stable under the influence of emerging production), nor community links are purely social links (the community always presupposes certain clan ties, albeit in a mediated and transformed form). The community reaches its classically developed form with the transition to animal husbandry and agriculture. But this transition is simultaneously the community's highest development and the beginning of its decomposition (with the transition to animal husbandry and agriculture, the possibility of regular surplus production first arises, and private property begins to emerge).

For the humans of the primitive communal system, society and humanity are limited to their communal collective. At the same time, humans do not yet fully distinguish themselves from the rest of the world surrounding them.

Is Karl Marx's remarkable thought applicable to this stage of human development? 'It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers—a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity—which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure...'^[2] In our view, yes. Of course, the great peculiarity of this stage must be taken into account.

For the first time, ownership of the means of production, as opposed to possession and use, and as an independent social relationship, as opposed to natural ties, begins to take shape in the community. This social relationship still exists in the community in its natural form and has not yet completely separated

itself from purely natural ties. In fact, communal property, whether among herdsmen or farmers, presupposes first and foremost ownership of land. But land is a given of nature in its ready-made form, an unproduced means of production.^[3]

Since land is used as a means of production, the relation of humans to nature is mediated, and thus humans distinguish themselves from nature, becoming aware of their distinction from nature. Since land is an unproduced, ready-made means of production taken from nature, the connection of humans with nature is unmediated, and thus humans relate to land as their own, using Karl Marx's words, inorganic body, i.e., they do not separate themselves from the land and everything on and in it (from stones, trees, rivers, etc.). From this latter perspective, the social relations have not yet penetrated the productive relations of man towards nature.

Moreover, man as an owner is a member of the community, i.e., initially of a naturally formed collective, a collective in which natural links are always present in one form or another as an integral moment of social relations. Therefore, the relation of community members to each other is both mediated by production and given as something natural. And as long as land, as an unproduced means of production, plays the role of the decisive means of production, the basis for man's relation to their surrounding environment as their inorganic body is preserved to some degree. For 'The real appropriation through the labour process happens under these presuppositions, which are not themselves the product of labour, but appear as its natural or divine presuppositions.'^[4] In this respect, humans are still directly one with nature. The objectively existing goal of such a structure is the maintenance of the life of man as a member of the community.

The next stage of human development represents the negation of the previous one.

The transition to animal husbandry and agriculture signifies both the development of the community and

the beginning of a long, epoch-spanning history of its decomposition. Private property is being developed. The development of the productive forces negates the previous level and character of their development: the possibility of regular production of means of subsistence beyond the absolutely indispensable minimum for maintaining physical existence arises, social division of labour emerges, whereas previously division of labour based on natural differences (sex, age, individual innate qualities) predominated. The improvement of individually operated tools was the basis for the development of private property.

Private property developed through the transformation of communal property, and thus at all stages of this transformation, it presupposed the existence of communal property to some extent and in some form.

With the development of private property, antagonistic classes and the exploitation of man by man emerge. Exploitation, since it was not limited to the occasional extraction of surplus product but became constant and encompassed the production process, necessarily had to include the appropriation of another human being (or other people) as an objective condition of production. But the economic appropriation of a human being as an objective condition of production is impossible without subordinating his will, without applying violence, without establishing relations of domination and coercion. Such exploitation of man inevitably requires more or less constant and direct political coercion, violence, and necessarily gives rise to such violence, i.e., economic relations of production directly appear as political, are inseparable from political relations.

This is the case everywhere and as long as land, as an unproduced means of production, plays a decisive role in production, and private property has not completely decomposed communal property, i.e., this situation is characteristic of slave-owning and feudal societies.

Although private property in these societies has

not yet fully transformed the inherited basis (the relation of people to the means of production and the relations of people to each other, characteristic of the previous stage), it is the stages, steps of the development of private property, and not the forms of communal property, that should serve as the basis for dividing this stage of human history into major stages. Why? First and foremost, this is because the relation to land as an unproduced means of production and the community at this stage are generally in decline, and the leading factor in the development of society is the improvement of the means of labour produced by people, and for a long time, predominantly those means of labour that are operated individually.

The first negation of the previous stage reaches its apex under capitalism.

With the development of the productive forces, produced means of production begin to play an increasingly significant role in production. Initially, these are mainly means of production operated motion individually. Accordingly, the development of property based on one's own labour is taking place. (Of course, the features of the previous stage do not disappear completely. An example is the medieval organisation of urban artisans.) As this property develops, the connection of individuals in production increasingly takes place through the exchange of products between isolated individual producers. Such exchange means, at the same time, the expansion of the market and the growth of the diversity of needs. Further market growth leads to production for the market, to the subordination of production to exchange. This necessitates increased production, increased scale, leads to the ruin and impoverishment of some and the concentration of means of production in the hands of others, the separation of the means of production from the producers. (Here, we are referring to the main tendency in the broadest sense.)

Produced means of production acquire a decisive

role in the production process. This circumstance, as well as the connection between producers through the exchange of products of labour, represents the separation of social relations from natural links, the separation of humans from nature, and a qualitatively different level of separation compared to the dominance of the communal form of property. At the same time, this separation is not complete.

Indeed, the decisive role of produced means of production means that the relation of the producer to the means of production on the scale of society as a whole is mediated by labour, and therefore the fundamental basis for identifying the producer with the objective conditions of production, for identifying man with the means of production, disappears.

And yet the difference between man and nature, even under the conditions of the highest development of private property that takes place under capitalism, on the one hand, does not reach its end, and on the other, appears as a rupture. It does not reach its end, since people in the production process are connected only through the exchange of things, products of labour, and therefore producers act as produced things, as products of labour, and as products of labour they are bought and sold. (The product of labour is not the human body itself, but rather its capacity for labour.)

The difference between man and nature under private property is a rupture between them. The rupture between man and nature develops to the highest degree under capitalism. Nature, as a condition of production, is hostile to the worker who is deprived of the means of production. Private owners seek to use it for their own narrow, selfish interests. Under conditions of private property, the desire to enslave nature and dominate it prevails. This enslavement has two sides: on the one hand, it is the transformation of nature in the direction desired by people, and on the other, it becomes merely a slave that can be disregarded, whose forces can be mercilessly exploited. In such a situation, when the productive forces

develop to such an extent that people become capable of subjugating the entire surrounding environment, a conflict arises between man and nature—an ecological crisis that threatens the very existence of humanity. The gap between people and the social forces they generate arises and grows under private ownership, reaching its peak under capitalism. The forces of human interaction increasingly oppose the people themselves, divided by private property, and the gap and contradiction between classes, between man and society, grows. Manifestations of the spontaneous action of social forces include, for example, the anarchy of production, and economic crises.

The very foundations of capitalism and its necessary development give rise to the material and spiritual preconditions for the abolition of capitalism and private property.

The most important material precondition for the abolition of capitalism and all private property is that produced means of production, having become decisive, acquire a social character. The cooperative, ultimately social character of the means of production becomes a technical necessity at the stage where production becomes mechanised: machines, and especially systems of machines, are created and set in motion by many people, collectively.

At the same time, before the advent of large-scale industry, a particular technical structure was found empirically. With the advent of large-scale industry, the situation changed dramatically: technical structures are discovered theoretically, and this is of enormous importance for the development and very existence of private property.^[5] In the course of the development of large-scale industry, it is not direct labour that becomes paramount, but the technological application of natural science and that ‘general productive force arising from social combination [Gliederung] in total production on the other side—a combination which appears as a natural fruit of social labour (although it is a historic product).’^[6] But the essence of capital is the production of surplus value,

and surplus value is created by living, direct labour. Consequently, by developing large-scale industry, capital thereby prepares the conditions for its own decomposition and the preconditions for a future communist society.

Communism is the negation of the negation.

The socialist revolution marks the beginning of unity between man, society and nature, between man and society. It is as if there is a return to the initial unity with nature. But this is only a return in appearance, for unity is established while preserving all the positive achievements of the first stage of negation. People continue to strive to master nature, having enormous opportunities to do so. But this mastery must also involve the preservation and improvement of nature. This is precisely the communist attitude towards nature.

Capitalism has already created the conditions for negating the negation of the initial character of human appropriation of nature in production. If the original appropriation of nature in the history of humanity was simply as a given, unmodified entity, then humans began to transform objects by means of modified natural objects. Accordingly, the main transformer was direct labour. In the course of the development of large-scale industry, and especially at its highest stage—the automated system of machines—‘as middle link between the object [Objekt] and himself; rather, he inserts the process of nature (emphasis added—V.V.), transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it.’^[7] Consequently, there is a return to the starting point, to the use of natural processes, but this is not simply a return to the beginning; at the same time, the achievements of the first negation are preserved: man consciously directs natural processes to obtain the useful effect he needs.

However, under capitalism, general wealth develops in an antagonistic form. ‘On the one side, then,’ writes Karl Marx, ‘it calls to life all the powers of

science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value.^[8]

Only the socialisation of the ownership of the means of production eliminates this contradiction and opens up space for the free development of the wealth of society. The real wealth of society, if we abstract from its bourgeois form, is nothing other than the constant production and reproduction of man as a complete, universal, harmonious being.

The socialisation of the means of production, carried out for the first time in the socialist revolution, is the elimination of the social forces that are separate from and hostile to man. The establishment of public ownership of the means of production is the negation of private property and, at the same time, a return to the starting point, to communal property. Both communal and public property are the property of the collective. But public property, unlike communal property, is not the property of a group of people, but the property of the whole of society. In its most developed form, public property is the property of the whole of humanity, which has become socialised. In addition, public property preserves, in a transformed form, the positive achievements of the development of private property.

The goal of socialised humanity is the free, all-round, harmonious development of each person, which acts both as an end in itself and as a necessary condition for the same kind of development of all other people. This goal is also the negation of the negation. The starting point was the reproduction of the physical existence of a community member as the goal and condition of the physical existence of other community members and the community as a whole. As private property developed, the goal

of social development became the production and reproduction of private owners as private owners, while people who were, to one degree or another, deprived of private property, the exploited classes, served as a means to this end on a scale of society as a whole. The development of private property was at the same time an increasing separation of private property from the direct link with the individuality of the owners and with natural conditions, i.e., private property acquired increasing independence in relation to the personality of the owner and to nature. Under capitalism, this independence fully develops. Therefore, the main goal of the development of society becomes not the individual consumption of private property, but its constant productive consumption as self-increasing private property. Thus, even the private owner, even if satisfied with his position, is to some extent a means of the movement of private property, of the social forces created by people, separated from people and subordinating people.

Under communism, the goal of the development of society once again becomes each and every person. However, now this person is not merely a member of a limited community, but a member of human society as a whole. The achievements of the class/antagonistic stage of the development of society are not eliminated. After all, it is precisely during the development of private property, and primarily during the development of capitalist private property, that international relations of production, universal needs, and so on are created, albeit to a limited extent. However, there is a 'cleansing' of the antagonistic form of development: the main goal is no longer simply the production of the individual's physical existence, nor merely their consumption of material and spiritual goods as an isolated individual, but rather the production and reproduction of the human as a member of humanity, as a member of human society.

Since communism is the negation of the negation,

it cannot be fully understood without taking into account what it negates. The theory of communist society necessarily presupposes and includes a consideration of the entire history of the emergence, formation, and development of humanity.

Thus, the issues analysed in this pamphlet turn out to be methodological questions for studying the true history of humanity—communism—as the indispensable outcome of the entire development of humanity.

Notes

[1] Under certain favourable circumstances, even gathering, hunting and fishing could provide regular yields at the dawn of human history. However, this regularity lies precisely in external natural conditions, rather than in gathering, hunting and fishing themselves. It was only with the emergence of animal husbandry and agriculture that labour arose which, by its very nature, made it possible to obtain regular means of subsistence.

[2] K. Marx, *Das Kapital* vol. 3, p. 519, Chapter 47. Genesis of Capitalist Ground-Rent

[3] As above, p. 539

[4] K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 399, 'Forms which precede capitalist production'

[5] K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 317-318

[6] K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 619, 'The Chapter on Capital (continuation)'.

[7] As above, p. 624, 'Contradiction between the foundation of bourgeois production (value as measure) and its development. Machines etc.'

[8] As above, p. 625

