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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

(1895)

Written: 1895.

Published in English: Lawrence & Wishart, London 1947.

Sources: Georgi Plekhanov, **Selected Philosophical Works**, Vol.I. & G Plekhanov (N. Beltov), **The Development of the Monist View of History**.

Publishers: Progress Publishers, Moscow 1974 & Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1956.

Translators: Andrew Rothstein (main text & appendix I) & A. Fineberg (preface and appendix II).

Transcribed: Sally Ryan and Brian Baggins for marxists.org in 2000 and 2004.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter I French Materialism of the Eighteenth Century

“If you nowadays,” says Mr. Mikhailovsky, “meet a young man ... who, even with some unnecessary haste, informs you that he is a ‘materialist’, this does not mean that he is a materialist in the general philosophical sense, in which in olden days we had admirers of Buchner and Moleschott. Very often the person with whom you are talking is not in the least interested either in the metaphysical or in the scientific side of materialism, and even has a very vague idea of them. What he wants to say is that he is a follower of the theory of economic materialism, and that in a particular and conditional sense.” [1]

We do not know what kind of young men Mr. Mikhailovsky has been meeting. But his words may give rise to the impression that the teaching of the representatives of “economic materialism” has connection with materialism “in the general philosophical sense”. Is that true? Is “economic materialism” really and poor in content as it seems to Mr. Mikhailovsky?

A brief sketch of the history of that doctrine will reply.

What is “materialism in the general philosophical sense”?

Materialism is the direct opposite of *idealism*. Idealism strives to explain all the phenomena of Nature, all the qualities of matter, by these or those qualities of the *spirit*. Materialism acts in the exactly opposite way. It tries to explain psychic phenomena by these or those qualities of *matter*, by this or that organisation of the

human or, in more general terms, of the animal *body*. All those philosophers in the eyes of whom the prime factor is matter belong to the camp of the *materialists*; and all those who consider such a factor to be the *spirit* are *idealists*.

That is all that can be said about materialism in general, about “materialism in the general philosophical sense”, as time built up on its fundamental principle the most varied superstructures, which gave the materialism of one epoch quite a different aspect from the materialism of another.

Materialism and idealism exhaust the most important tendencies of philosophical thought. True, by their side there have almost always existed *dualist* systems of one kind or another, which recognise *spirit* and *matter* as separate and independent *substances*. *Dualism* was never able to reply satisfactorily to the inevitable question: how could these two separate substances, which have nothing in common between them, influence each other? Therefore the most consistent and most profound thinkers were always inclined to *monism*, i.e., to explaining phenomena with the help of *some one main principle* (*monos* in greek means “one”). Every consistent *idealist* is a monist to the same extent as every consistent *materialist*. In *this* respect there is no difference, for example, between Berkeley and Holbach. One was a consistent *idealist*, the other a no less consistent *materialist*, but both were equally *monistic*; both one and the other equally well understood the worthlessness of the *dualist outlook on the world*, which up to this day is still, perhaps the most widespread.

In the first half our century philosophy was dominated by *idealistic* monism. In its second half there triumphed in science with which meanwhile *philosophy* had been completely fused – *materialistic* monism, although far from always consistent and frank monism.

We do not require to set forth here all the history of materialism. For our purpose it will be sufficient to consider its development beginning with the second half of last century. And even here it will be important for us to have in view mainly one of its trends – true, the most important – namely, the materialism of Holbach, Helvetius and their supporters.

The materialists of this trend waged a hot polemic against the official thinkers of that time who, appealing to the authority of Descartes (whom they can hardly have well understood), asserted that man has certain *innate ideas*, i.e., such as appear independently of his experience. Contesting this view, the French materialists in fact were only setting forth the teaching of Locke, who at the end of the seventeenth century was already proving that there are “no innate principles”. But setting forth his teaching the French materialists gave it a more consistent form, dotting such “i’s” as Locke did

not wish to touch upon, being a well-bred English liberal. The French materialists were fearless *sensationalists*, consistent throughout, i.e., they considered all the psychic functions of man to be *transformed sensations*. It would be valueless to examine here to what extent, in this or that particular case, their arguments are satisfactory from the point of view of presentday science. It is self-evident that the French materialists did not know a great deal of what is now known to every schoolboy: it is sufficient to recall the views of Holbach on chemistry and physics, even though he was well acquainted with the natural science of *his* age. But the French materialists' incontestable and indispensable service lies in that they thought consistently from the standpoint of the *science of their age* – and that is all that one can and must demand of thinkers. It is not surprising that the science of our age has advanced beyond the French materialists of last century: what is important is that the *adversaries of those philosophers were backward people even in relation to science of that day*. True, the historians of philosophy usually oppose to the views of the French materialists the view of Kant, whom, of course, it would be strange to reproach with lack of knowledge. But this contraposition is quite unjustified, and it would not be difficult to show that both Kant and the French materialists took, essentially, the same view [2], but made use of it differently and therefore arrived at different conclusions, in keeping with the different characteristics of the social relations under the influence of which they lived and thought. We know that this opinion will be found paradoxical by people who are accustomed to believe every word of the historians of philosophy. There is no opportunity to prove it here by circumstantial argument, but we do not refuse to do so, if our opponents should require it.

Be that as it may, everyone knows that the French materialists regarded all the psychic activity of man as transformed *sensations* (sensations transformees). To consider psychic activity from this point of view means to consider all notions, all conceptions and feelings of man to be the result of the *influence of his environment upon him*. The French materialists did adopt this very view. They declared constantly, very ardently and quite categorically that man, with his views and feelings, is what his environment, i.e., in the first place *Nature*, and secondly *society*, make of him. “L’homme est tout education” (man depends entirely on education), affirms Helvetius, meaning by the word education the sum-total of social influence. This view of man as the fruit of his environment was the principal theoretical basis for the *progressive demands* of the French materialists. For indeed, if man depends on his environment, if he owes it *all* the qualities of his character, then he owes it also his defects; and consequently if you wish to combat his defects, you must in suitable fashion change his environment, and moreover his *social* environment in particular, because Nature makes man neither bad nor good. Put people in reasonable social relations, i.e., in conditions where the instinct of self-preservation of each of them ceases to impel him to

struggle against the remainder: co-ordinate the interests of the individual man with the interests of society as a whole – and virtue will appear of its own accord, just as a stone falls to the earth of its own accord when it loses any support. Virtue requires, not to be *preached*, but to be *prepared* by the reasonable arrangement of social relations. By the light-hearted verdict of the conservatives and reactionaries of last century, the morality of the French materialists is up to the present day considered to be an *egotistical* morality. They themselves gave a much truer definition: in their view it passed entirely into *politics*.

The doctrine that the spiritual world of man represents the fruit of his environment not infrequently led the French materialists to conclusions which they did not expect themselves. Thus, for example, they sometimes said that the views of man have absolutely no influence on his conduct, and that therefore the spreading of one idea or another in society cannot by a hair-breadth change its subsequent fate. Later on we shall show wherein such an opinion was mistaken, but at this stage let us turn our attention to another side of the views of the French materialists.

If the ideas of any particular *man* are determined by his environment, then the ideas of *humanity*, in their historical development, are determined by the development of the social environment, by the *history of social relationships*. Consequently, if we were to think of painting a picture of the “progress of human reason”, and if we were not to limit ourselves in doing so to the question of “*how?*” (*in what particular way did the historical advance of reason take place?*), and put to ourselves the quite natural question of “*why?*” (*why did that advance take place just in this fashion, and not otherwise?*), we should have to begin with the history of the environment, the history of the development of social relations. The centre of gravity of our research would thus be shifted, at all events in the first stages, in the direction of studying the laws of social development. The French materialists came right up against this problem, but proved unable not only to solve it but even correctly to state it.

Whenever they began speaking of the historical development of mankind, they forgot their sensationalist view of “man” in general and, like all the philosophers of “enlightenment” of that age, affirmed that *the world* (i.e., the social relations of mankind) *is governed by opinions* (*c'est l'opinion qui gouverne le monde*). [3] In this lies the radical contradiction from which the materialism of the eighteenth century suffered, and which, in the reasoning of its supporters, was divided into a whole series of secondary and derivative contradictions, just as a banknote is exchanged for small cash.

Thesis. Man, with all his *opinions*, is the product of his *environment*, and mainly of his social environment. This was the inevitable conclusion from the fundamental

proposition of Locke: *there are no innate principles.*

Antithesis. *Environment*, with all its qualities, is the product of opinions. This is the inevitable conclusion from the fundamental proposition of the historical philosophy of the French materialists: *c'est l'opinion qui gouverne le monde.*

From this radical contradiction there followed, for example, the following derivative contradictions:

Thesis. Man considers good those social relations which are useful to him. He considers bad those relations which are harmful to him. *The opinions of people are determined by their interests.* “L’opinion chez un peuple est toujours determinee par un interet dominant,” says Suard. [4] What we have here is not even a *conclusion* from the teachings of Locke, it is simply the repetition of his words: “No innate practical principles ... Virtue generally approved; not because innate, but because profitable ... Good and Evil ... are nothing but Pleasure or Pain, or that which occasions or procures Pleasure or Pain, to us.” [5]

Antithesis. The existing relations seem useful or harmful to people, according to the general system of opinions of the people concerned. In the words of the same Suard, every people “ne veut, n’aime, n’approuve que ce qu’il croit etre utile” (every people desires, loves and approves only what it considers useful). Consequently in the last resort everything again is reduced to the opinions which govern the world.

Thesis. Those are very much mistaken who think that religious morality – for example, the commandment to love one’s neighbour – even partially promoted the moral improvement of mankind. Such commandments, as ideas generally, are quite devoid of power over men. Everything depends on social environment and on social relations. [6] *Antithesis.* Historical experience shows us “que les opinions sacrees furent la source veritable des maux du genre humain” – and this is quite understandable, because if opinions generally govern the world, then mistaken opinions govern it like bloodthirsty tyrants.

It would be easy to lengthen the list of similar contradictions of the French materialists, inherited from them by many “materialists in the general philosophical sense” of our own age. But this would be unnecessary. Let us rather look more closely at the general character of these contradictions.

There are contradictions and contradictions. When Mr. V.V. contradicts himself at every step in his **Destinies of Capitalism** or in the first volume of his **Conclusions from an Economic Investigation of Russia**, his sins against logic can be of importance only as a “human document”: the future historian of Russian literature,

after pointing out these contradictions, will have to busy himself with the extremely interesting question, in the sense of social psychology, of why, with all their indubitable and obvious character, they remained unnoticed for many and many a reader of Mr. V.V. In the direct sense, the contradictions of the writer mentioned are as barren as the well-known fig-tree. There are contradictions of another character. Just as indubitable as the contradictions of Mr. V.V., they are distinguished from the latter by the fact that they do not send human thought to sleep, they do not retard its development, but push it on further, and sometimes push it so strongly that, in their consequences, they prove more fruitful than the most harmonious theories. Of such contradictions one may say in the words of Hegel: *Der Widerspruch ist das Fortleitende* (contradiction leads the way forward). It is just among these that the contradictions of French materialism in the eighteenth century must be rightfully placed.

Let us examine their main contradiction: *the opinions of men are determined by their environment; the environment is determined by opinions*. Of this one has to say what Kant said of his “antinomies” – the *thesis* is just as correct as the *antithesis*. For there can be no doubt that the opinions of men are determined by the social environment surrounding them. It is just as much beyond doubt that not a single people will put up with a social order which contradicts all its views: it will revolt against such an order, and reconstruct it according to its own ideals. Consequently it is also true that opinions govern the world. But then in what way can two propositions, true in themselves, contradict each other? The explanation is very simple. They contradict each other only because we are looking at them from an incorrect point of view. From that point of view it seems – and inevitably must seem – that if the thesis is right, then the antithesis is mistaken, and vice versa. But once you discover a correct point of view, the contradiction will disappear, and each of the propositions which confuse you will assume a new aspect. It will turn out to be supplementing or, more exactly, *conditioning* the other proposition, not excluding it at all; and if *this* proposition were untrue, then equally untrue would be *the other* proposition, which previously seemed to you to be its antagonist. But how is such a correct point of view to be discovered?

Let us take an example. It often used to be said, particularly in the eighteenth century, that the constitution of any given people was conditioned by the manners of that people; and this was quite justified. When the old republican manners of the Romans disappeared, their republic gave way to a monarchy. But on the other hand it used no less frequently to be asserted that the manners of a given people are conditioned by its constitution. This also cannot be doubted in the least. And indeed, how could republican manners appear in the Romans of the time, for example, of Heliogabalus? Is it not patently clear that the manners of the Romans during the

Empire were bound to represent something quite opposite to the old republican manners? And if it is clear, then we come to the general conclusion that the constitution is conditioned by manners, and manners – by the constitution. But then this is a contradictory conclusion. Probably we arrived at it on account of the mistaken character of one or the other of our propositions. Which in particular? Rack your brains as you will, you will not discover anything wrong either in one or in the other; they are both irreproachable, as in reality the manners of every given people do influence its constitution, and in this sense are its cause, while on the other hand they are conditioned by the constitution, and in this sense are its *consequence*. Where, then, is the way out? Usually, in questions of this kind, people confine themselves to discovering *interaction*: manners influence the constitution and the constitution influences manners. Everything becomes as clear as daylight, and people who are not satisfied with clarity of this kind betray a tendency to *one-sidedness* worthy of every condemnation. That is how almost all our intellectuals argue at the present time. They look at social life *from the point of view of interaction*: each side of life influences all others and, in its turn, experiences the influence of all the others. Only such a view is worthy of a thinking “sociologist”, while those who, like the Marxists, keep on seeking for some more profound reasons or other for social development, simply don’t see to what degree social life is complicated. The French writers of the Enlightenment were also inclined to this point of view, when they felt the necessity of bringing their views on social life into logical order and of solving the contradictions which were getting the upper hand of them. The most systematic minds among them (we do not refer here to Rousseau, who in general had little in common with the writers of the Enlightenment) did not go any further. Thus, for example, it is this viewpoint of interaction that is maintained by Montesquieu in his famous works: *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains* and *De l’Esprit des Lois*. [7] And this, of course, is a justifiable point of view. *Interaction undoubtedly exists between all sides of social life*. But unfortunately this justifiable point of view explains very little, for the simple reason that it gives no indication as to *the origin of the interacting forces*. If the constitution itself presupposes the manners which it influences, then obviously it is not to the constitution that those manners owe their first appearance. The same must be said of the manners too: if they already presuppose the constitution which they influence, then it is clear that it is not they which created it. In order to get rid of this muddle we must discover the historical factor which produced both the manners of the given people and its constitution, and thereby *created the very possibility of their interaction*. If we discover such a factor we shall reveal the correct point of view we are seeking, and then we shall solve without difficulty the contradiction which confuses us.

As far as the fundamental contradiction of the French materialists is concerned, this means the following. The French materialists were very mistaken when, contradicting

their customary view of history, they said that ideas mean *nothing*, since environment means *everything*. No less mistaken was that customary view of theirs on history (c'est l'opinion qui gouverne le monde), which proclaimed opinions to be the main fundamental reason for the existence of any given social environment. There is undoubted interaction between opinions and environment. But scientific investigation cannot stop at recognising this interaction, since interaction is far from explaining social phenomena to us. In order to understand the history of mankind, i.e., in the present case the history of its opinions, on the one hand, and the history of those social relations through which it passed in its development, on the other, we must rise above the point of view of interaction, and discover, if possible, that factor which determines both *the development of the social environment and the development of opinions*. The problem of social science in the nineteenth century was precisely to discover that factor.

The world is governed by opinions. But then, opinions do not remain unchanged. What conditions their changes? "The spreading of enlightenment," replied, as early as the seventeenth century, La Mothe le Vayer. This is the most abstract and most superficial expression of the idea that opinions dominate the world. The writers of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century held to it firmly, sometimes supplementing it with melancholy reflections that the fate of enlightenment, unfortunately, is in general very unreliable. But the realisation that such a view was inadequate could already be noticed among the most talented of them. Helvetius remarked that the development of knowledge is subordinated to certain laws, and that, consequently, there are some hidden and unknown causes on which it depends. He made an attempt of the highest interest, still not assessed at its true value, to explain the social and intellectual development of man by *his material needs*. This attempt ended, and for many reasons could not but end, in failure. But it remained a testament, as it were, for those thinkers of the following century who might wish to continue the work of the French materialists.

Chapter II

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Footnotes

[1] **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, January 1894, Section II, p. 98.

[2] [Plekhanov's statement about "both Kant and the French materialists taking, essentially, the same view" is erroneous. In contradistinction to Kant's agnosticism and subjective idealism, the French materialists of the eighteenth century believed in cognisability of the external world.]

[3] "I mean by opinion the result of the mass of truths and errors diffused in a nation: a result which determines its judgements, its respect or contempt, its love or hate, which forms its inclinations and customs, its vices and virtues – in a word, its manners. This is the opinion of which it must be said that it governs the world." Suard, **Melanges de Litterature**, Paris, An XII, tome III, p.400.

[4] Suard, tome III, p.401.

[5] **Essay Concerning Human Understanding**, Book I, Ch.3; Book II, Ch.20, 21, 28.

[6] This principle is more than once repeated in Holbach's **Systeme de la Nature**. It is also expressed by Helvetius when he says: "Let us suppose that I have spread the most stupid opinion, from which follow the most revolting consequences; if I have changed nothing in the laws, I will change nothing in manners either" (**De l'Homme**, Section VII, Ch.4). The same opinion is frequently expressed in his **Correspondance Litteraire** by Grimm, who lived for long among the French materialists and by Voltaire, who fought the materialists. In his **Philosophe ignorant**, as in many other works, the "Patriarch of Ferney" endeavoured to demonstrate that not a single philosopher had ever yet influenced the conduct of his neighbours, since they were guided in their acts by customs, not metaphysics.

[7] Holbach in his **Politique naturelle** takes the standpoint of interaction between manners and constitution. But as he has there to deal with practical questions, this point of view leads him into a vicious circle: in order to improve manners one must perfect the constitution, and in order to improve it, one must improve manners. Holbach is rescued from this circle by an imaginary bon prince, who was desired by all the writers of the Enlightenment, and who, appearing like deus ex machina, solved the contradiction, improving both manners and constitution.

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The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter II

French Historians of the Restoration

“One of the most important conclusions which can be drawn from the study of history is that government is the most effective cause of the character of peoples; that the virtues or the vices of nations, their energy or their weakness, their talents, their enlightenment or their ignorance, are hardly ever the consequence of climate or of the qualities of the particular race, but are the work of the laws; that nature has given *all to everyone*, while government preserves or destroys, in the men subjected to it, those qualities which originally constituted the common heritage of the human race.” In Italy there occurred no changes either in climate or in race (The influx of the barbarians was too insignificant to alter the latter’s quality): “Nature was the same for Italians of all ages; only governments changed – and these changes always preceded or accompanied changes in the national character.”

In this way Sismondi contested the doctrine which made the historical fate of peoples depend only on geographical environment. [1] His objections are not unfounded. In fact, *geography* is far from explaining everything in history, just because the latter is *history*, i.e., because, in Sismondi’s words, governments change in spite of the fact that geographical environment remains unchanged. But this in passing: we are interested here in quite a different question.

The reader has probably already noticed that, comparing the unchanging character of geographical environment with the changeability of the historical destinies of peoples, Sismondi links these destinies with one main factor – “*government*”, i.e., with the *political institutions of the given country*. The character of a people is entirely

determined by the character of the government. True, having stated this proposition categorically, Sismondi immediately and very essentially modifies it: political changes, he says, preceded changes of the national character or *accompanied them*. Here the character of the government appears to be rather determined by the character of the people. But in this case the historical philosophy of Sismondi encounters the contradiction with which we are already familiar, and which confused the French writers of the Enlightenment: the manners of a given people depend on its constitution; the constitution depends on their manners. Sismondi was just as little able to solve this contradiction as the writers of the Enlightenment: he was forced to found his arguments now upon one, now upon the other branch of this antinomy. But be that as it may, having once decided on one of them – namely that which proclaims that the character of a people depends on its government – he attributed to the conception of government an exaggeratedly wide meaning: in his eyes it embraced *absolutely all the qualities of the given social environment*, all the peculiarities of the social relations concerned. It would be more exact to say that in his view absolutely all the qualities of the social environment concerned were the work of “government”, the result of the constitution. This is the point of view of the eighteenth century. When the French materialists wanted briefly and strongly to express their conviction of the omnipotent influence of environment on man, they used to say: *c’est la législation qui fait tout* (everything depends on legislation). But when they spoke of legislation, they had in mind almost exclusively *political legislation, the system of government*. Among the works of the famous Jean-Baptiste Vico there is a little article entitled *Essay of a System of Jurisprudence, in Which the Civil Law of the Romans Is Explained by Their Political Revolutions*. [2] Although this *Essay* was written at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, nevertheless the view it expresses on the relationship between civil law and the system of government prevailed up to the French Restoration. The writers of the Enlightenment reduced everything to “politics”.

But the political activity of the “legislator” is in any event a *conscious* activity, although naturally not always expedient. The conscious activity of man depends on his “*opinions*”. In this way the French writers of the Enlightenment without noticing it themselves returned to the idea of the *omnipotence of opinions*, even in those cases when they desired to emphasise the idea of the *omnipotence of environment*.

Sismondi was still adopting the view-point of the eighteenth century. [3] Younger French historians were already holding different views.

The course and outcome of the French Revolution, with its surprises that nonplussed the most “enlightened” thinkers, proved a refutation, graphic to the highest degree, of the idea that opinions were omnipotent. Then many became quite disillusioned in the power of “reason while others who did not give way to disillusionment began all the

more to incline to acceptance of the idea of the omnipotence of *environment*, and to studying the course of its development. But at the time of the Restoration environment too began to be examined from a new point of view: Great historic events had made such a mock, both of “*legislators*” and of political constitutions, that now it already seemed strange to make dependent on the latter, as a basic factor, all the qualities of a particular social environment. Now political constitutions began to be considered as something derivative, as a *consequence* and not as a *cause*.

“The majority of writers, scholars, historians or publicists”, says Guizot in his **Essais sur l’histoire de France**, [4] “have attempted to explain the condition of society, the degree or the nature of its civilisation, by its political institutions. It would be wiser to begin with the study of society itself, in order to learn and understand its political institutions. Before becoming a cause, institutions are a consequence; society creates them before it begins to change under their influence; and instead of judging the condition of a people from the system or the forms of its government, we must first of all investigate the condition of the people, in order to judge what should be and what could be its government.... Society, its composition, the mode of life of individual persons in keeping with their social position, the relations of various classes of persons, in a word, the *civil condition of men* (l’etat des personnes) – such, without doubt, is the first question which attracts the attention of the historian who desires to know how peoples lived, and of the publicist who desires to know how they were governed.” [5]

This view is directly opposed to the view of Vice. The latter explained the history of civil law by political revolutions. Guizot explains the political order by civil conditions, i.e., by civil law. But the French historian goes even further in his analysis of “social composition”. He states that, among all the peoples who appeared on the historical arena after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the “*civil condition*” of men was closely connected with *agrarian relations* (etat des terres), and therefore the study of their agrarian relations must precede the study of their civil condition. “*In order to understand political institutions, we must study the various strata existing in society and their mutual relationships. In order to understand these various social strata, we must know the nature and the relations of landed property.*” [6] It is from this point of view that Guizot studies the history of France under the first two dynasties. He presents it as the history of the struggle of various social strata at the time. In his history of the English Revolution he makes a new step forward, representing this event as the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy, and tacitly recognising in this way that to explain the political life of a particular country it is necessary to study not only its agrarian relations, but also all its property relations in general. [7]

Such a view of the political history of Europe was far from being the exclusive property of Guizot at that time. It was shared by many other historians, among whom

we shall refer to Augustin Thierry and Mignet.

In his **Vues des revolutions d'Angleterre** Thierry represents the history of the English revolutions as the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy. "Everyone whose ancestors were numbered among the conquerors of England," he writes of the first Revolution, "left his castle and journeyed to the royal camp, where he took up a position appropriate to his rank. The inhabitants of the towns and ports flocked to the opposite camp. Then it might have been said that the armies were gathering, one in the name of *idleness* and *authority*, the other in the name of *labour* and *liberty*. All idlers, whatever their origin, all those who sought in life only enjoyment, secured without labour, rallied under the royal banner, defending interests similar to their own interests; and on the contrary, those of the descendants of the former conquerors who were then engaged in industry joined the Party of the Commons." [8]

The religious movement of the time was, in Thierry's opinion, only the reflection of positive lay interests. "On both sides the war was waged for positive interests. Everything else was external or a pretext. The men who defended the cause of the *subjects* were for the most part Presbyterians, i.e., they desired no subjection even in religion. Those who adhered to the opposite party belonged to the Anglican or the Catholic faith; this was because, even in the religious sphere, they strove for authority and for the imposition of taxes on men." Thierry quotes in this connection the following words of Fox in his **History of the Reign of James II**: "The Whigs considered all religious opinions with a view to politics ... Even in their hatred to popery, [they] did not so much regard the superstition, or imputed idolatry of that unpopular sect, as its tendency to establish arbitrary power in the state." [9]

In Mignet's opinion, "the movement of society is determined by the dominating interests. Amid various obstacles, this movement strives towards its end, halts once that end has been reached, and yields place to another movement which at first is imperceptible, and becomes apparent only when it becomes predominant. Such was the course of development of feudalism. Feudalism existed in the needs of man while it yet did not exist in fact – the first epoch; in the second epoch it existed in fact, gradually ceasing to correspond to men's needs, wherefore there came to an end, ultimately, its existence in fact. Not a single revolution has yet taken place in any other way." [10]

In his history of the French Revolution, Mignet regards events precisely from this point of view of the "needs" of various social classes. The struggle of these classes is, in his opinion, the mainspring of political events. Naturally, such a view could not be to the taste of eclectics, even in those good old times when their brains worked much more than they do nowadays. The eclectics reproached the partisans of the new historical theories with fatalism, with prejudice in favour of a system (*esprit de systeme*). As

always happens in such cases, the eclectics did not notice at all the really weak sides of the new theories, but in return with the greater energy attacked their unquestionably strong sides. However, this is as old as the world itself, and is therefore of little interest. Much more interesting is the circumstance that these new views were defended by the *Saint-Simonist* Bazard, one of the most brilliant representatives of the socialism of that day.

Bazard did not consider Mignet's book on the French Revolution to be flawless. Its defect was, in his eyes, that among other thing; it represented the event it described as a separate fact, standing without any connection with "that long chain of efforts which, having overthrown the old social order, was to facilitate the establishment of the new regime". But the book also has unquestionable merits. "The author has set himself the task of characterising those parties which, one after the other, direct the revolution, of revealing the connection of these parties with various social classes, of displaying what particular chain of events places them one after the other at the head of the movement, and how finally they disappear." That same "spirit of system and fatalism", which the eclectics put forward as a reproach against the historians of the new tendency, advantageously distinguishes, in Bazard's opinion, the work of Guizot and Mignet from the works "of literary historians (i.e., historians concerned only for beauty of style) who, in spite of their number, have not moved historical science forward one step since the eighteenth century". [\[11\]](#)

If Augustin Thierry, Guizot or Mignet had been asked, do the manners of a people create its constitution, or, on the contrary, does its constitution create its manners, each of them would have replied that, however great and however unquestionable is the interaction of the manners of a people and its constitution, in the last analysis, both owe their existence to a third factor, lying deeper – "*the civil condition of men, their property relations*".

In this way the contradiction which confused the philosophers of the eighteenth century would have been solved, and every impartial person would recognise that Bazard was right in saying that science had made a step forward, in the person of the representatives of the new views on history.

But we know already that the contradiction mentioned is only a particular case of the fundamental contradiction of the views on society held in the eighteenth century: (1) man with all his thoughts and feelings is the product of environment; (2) environment is the creation of man, the product of his "opinions". Can it be said that the new views on history had resolved this fundamental contradiction of French materialism? Let us examine how the French historians of the Restoration explained the origin of that civil condition, those property relations, the close study of which alone could, in their

opinion, provide the key to the understanding of historical events.

The property relations of men belong to the sphere of their *legal* relations; property is first of all a legal institution. To say that the key to understanding historical phenomena must be sought in the property relations of men means saying that this key lies in institutions of law. But whence do these institutions come? Guizot says quite rightly that political constitutions were a *consequence* before they became a cause; that society first created them and then began to change under their influence. But cannot the same be said of property relations? Were not they in their turn a consequence before they became a cause? Did not society have first to create them before it could experience their decisive influence on itself?

To these quite reasonable questions Guizot gives highly unsatisfactory replies.

The civil condition of the peoples who appeared on the historical arena after the fall of the Western Roman Empire was in the closest causal connection with landownership [12]: the relation of man to the land determined his social position. Throughout the epoch of feudalism, all institutions of society were determined in the last analysis by agrarian relations. As for those relations they, in the words of the same Guizot, “at first, during the first period after the invasion of the barbarians”, were determined by the social position of the landowner: “the land he occupied acquired this or that character, according to the degree of strength of the landowner.” [13] But what then determined the social position of the landowner? What determined “at first, during the first period after the invasion of the barbarians” the greater or lesser degree of liberty, the greater or lesser degree of power of the landowner? Was it previous political relations among the barbarian conquerors? But Guizot has already told us that political relations are a consequence and not a cause. In order to understand the political life of the barbarians in the epoch preceding the fall of the Roman Empire we should have, according to the advice of our author, to study their civil condition, their social order, the relations of various classes in their midst, and so forth; and such a study would once again bring us to the question of what determines the property relations of men, what creates the forms of property existing in a given society. And it is obvious that we should gain nothing if, in order to explain the position of various classes in society, we began referring to the relative degrees of their freedom and power. This would be not a reply, but a repetition of the question in a new form, with some details.

The question of the origin of property relations is hardly likely even to have arisen in Guizot’s mind in the shape of a scientific problem, strictly and accurately formulated. We have seen that it was quite impossible for him not to have taken account of the question, but the very confusion of the replies which he gave to it bears witness to the unclarity with which he conceived it. In the last analysis the development of forms of

property was explained by Guizot by exceptionally vague reference to *human nature*. It is not surprising that this historian, whom the eclectics accused of excessively systematic views, himself turned out to be no mean eclectic, for example in his works on the history of civilisation.

Augustin Thierry, who examined the struggle of religious sects and political parties from the view-point of the “*positive interests*” of various social classes and passionately sympathised with the struggle of the third estate against the aristocracy, explained the origin of these classes and ranks in *conquest*. “Tout cela date d’une conquête; il y a une conquête la-dessous” (all this dates from a conquest; there’s a conquest at the bottom of it), he says of class and estate relations among the modern peoples, which are exclusively the subject of his writing. He incessantly developed this idea in various ways, both in his articles and in his later learned works. But apart from the fact that “conquest” – an international political act – returned Thierry to the point of view of the eighteenth century, which explained all social life by the activity of the legislator, i.e., of political authority, every fact of conquest inevitably arouses the question: why were its social consequences these, and not those? Before the invasion of the German barbarians Gaul had already lived through a Roman conquest. The social consequences of *that* conquest were very different from those which were produced by the *German* conquest. The social consequences of the conquest of China by the Mongols very little resembled those of the conquest of England by the Normans. Whence do such differences come? To say that they are determined by differences in the social structure of the various peoples which come into conflict at different times means to say nothing, because what determines that social structure remains unknown. To refer in this question to some previous conquests means moving in a vicious circle. However many the conquests you enumerate, you will nevertheless arrive in the long run at the inevitable conclusion that in the social life of peoples, there is some X, some unknown factor, which is not only not determined by conquests, but which on the *contrary itself conditions* the consequences of conquests and even frequently, perhaps always, *the conquests themselves*, and is the fundamental reason for international conflicts. Thierry in his **History of the Conquest of England by the Normans** himself points out, on the basis of old monuments, the motives which guided the Anglo-Saxons in their desperate struggle for their independence “We must fight,” said one of the earls, “whatever may be the danger to us; for what we have to consider is not whether we shall accept and receive a new lord ... The case is quite otherwise. The Duke of Normandy has given our lands to his barons, to his knights and to all his men, the greater part of whom have already done homage to him for them: they will all look for their gift if their duke become our king; and he himself will be bound to deliver up to them our lands, our wives and our daughters: all this is promised to them beforehand. They come, not only to ruin us, but to ruin our descendants also, and to take from us the country of our

ancestors,” etc. On his part, William the Conqueror said to his companions: “Fight well and put all to death; for if we conquer we shall all be rich. What I gain, you will gain; if I conquer, you will conquer; if I take this land, you shall have it.” [14] Here it is abundantly clear that the conquest was not an end in itself, and that “beneath it” lay certain “positive” i.e., *economic interests*. The question is, what gave those interests the form which they then had? Why was it that both natives and conquerors were inclined precisely to the feudal system of landownership, and not to any other? “Conquests” explain nothing in this case.

In Thierry’s **Histoire du tiers etat**, and in all his sketches of the internal history of France and England, we have already a fairly full picture of the historical advance of the bourgeoisie. It is sufficient to study even this picture to see how unsatisfactory is the view which makes dependent on conquest the origin and development of a given social system: that development progressed quite at variance with the interests and wishes of the feudal aristocracy, i.e., the conquerors and their descendants.

It can be said without any exaggeration that in his historical researches Thierry himself did much to refute his own views on the historical role of conquests. [15]

In Mignet we find the same confusion. He speaks of the influence of landownership on political forms. But what the forms of landownership depend on, why they develop in this or that direction, this Mignet does not know. In the last analysis he, too, makes forms of landownership depend on *conquest*. [16]

He senses that it is not abstract conceptions such as “conquerors” and “conquered”, but people possessing living flesh, having definite rights and social relations that we are dealing with in the history of international conflicts; but here, too, his analysis does not go very far. “When two peoples living on the same soil mingle,” he says, “they lose their weak sides and communicate their strong sides to each other. [17]

This is not profound, nor is it quite clear.

Faced with the question of the origin of property relations, each of the French historians of the time of the Restoration whom we have mentioned would probably have attempted, like Guizot, to escape from the difficulty with the help of more or less ingenious references to “*human nature*”.

The view of “human nature” as the highest authority which decides all “knotty cases” in the sphere of law, morality, politics and economics, was inherited in its entirety by the writers of the nineteenth century from the writers of the Enlightenment of the previous century.

If man, when he appears in the world, does not bring with him a prepared store of innate “practical ideas”; if virtue is respected, not because it is innate in people, but because it is useful, as Locke asserted; if the principle of social utility is the highest law, as Helvetius said; if man is the measure of things wherever there is a question of mutual human relations—then it is quite natural to draw the conclusion that the nature of man is the view-point from which we should assess given relations as being useful or harmful, rational or irrational. It was from this standpoint that the writers of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century discussed both the social order then existing and the reforms which they thought desirable. Human nature was for them the most important argument in their discussions with their opponents. How great in their eyes was the importance of this argument is shown excellently, for example, by the following observation of Condorcet: “The ideas of justice and law take shape invariably in an identical form among all beings gifted with the capacity of sensation and of acquiring ideas. Therefore they will be identical.” True, it happens that people distort them (*les alterent*). “But every man who thinks correctly will just as inevitably arrive at certain ideas in morality as in mathematics. These ideas are the necessary outcome of the irrefutable truth that men are perceptive and rational beings.” In reality the views on society of the French writers of the Enlightenment were not deduced, of course, from this more than meagre truth, but were suggested to them by their environment. The “man” whom they had in view was distinguished not only by his capacity to perceive and think: his “nature” demanded a definite bourgeois system of society (the works of Holbach included just those demands which later were put into effect by the Constituent Assembly). His “nature” prescribed free trade, non-interference of the state in the property relations of citizens (*laissez faire, laissez passer!*), [18] etc., etc. The writers of the Enlightenment looked on human nature through the prism of particular social needs and relations. But they did not suspect that history had put some prism before their eyes. They imagined that through their lips “human nature” itself was speaking, understood and assessed at its true value at last, by the enlightened representatives of humanity.

Not all the writers of the eighteenth century had an identical conception of human nature. Sometimes they differed very strongly among themselves on this subject. But all of them were equally convinced that a correct view of that nature alone could provide the key to the explanation of social phenomena.

We said earlier that many French writers of the Enlightenment had already noticed a certain conformity to law in the development of human reason. They were led to the idea of this conformity to law first and foremost by the *history of literature*: “what people,” they ask, “was not first a poet and only then a thinker?” [19] But how is such succession to be explained? By the needs of society, which determine the development

of language itself, replied the philosophers. “The art of speech, like all other arts, is the fruit of social needs and interests,” asserted the Abbe Arnaud, in the address just mentioned in a footnote. Social needs change, and therefore there changes also the course of development of the “arts”. But what determines social needs? Social needs, the needs of men who compose society, are determined by the nature of man. Consequently it is in that nature that we must seek the explanation of this, and not that, course of intellectual development.

In order to play the part of the highest criterion, human nature obviously had to be considered as fixed once for all, as *invariable*. The writers of the Enlightenment did in fact regard it as such as the reader could see from the words of Condorcet quoted above. But if human nature is invariable, how then can it serve to explain the course of the intellectual or social development of mankind? What is the process of any development? A series of changes. Can those changes be explained with the help of something that is invariable, that is fixed once for all? Is this the reason why a variable magnitude changes, that a constant magnitude remains unchanged? The writers of the Enlightenment realised that this could *not* be so, and in order to get out of their difficulty they pointed out that the *constant* magnitude itself proves to be variable, within certain limits. Man goes through different ages: childhood, youth, maturity and so forth. At these various ages his needs are not identical: “In his childhood man has only his feelings, his imagination and memory: he seeks only to be amused and requires only songs and stories. The age of passions succeeds: the soul requires to be moved and agitated. Then the intelligence extends and reason grows stronger: both these faculties in their turn require exercise, and their activity extends to everything that is capable of arousing curiosity.”

Thus develops the individual man: these changes are conditioned by his nature; and just because they are in his nature, they are to be noticed in the spiritual development of *all mankind*. It is by these changes that is to be explained the circumstance that peoples begin with epics and end with philosophy. [20]

It is easy to see that “explanations” of this kind, which did not explain anything at all, only imbued the description of the course of intellectual development of man with a certain picturesqueness (simile always sets off more vividly the quality of the object being described). It is easy to see likewise that, in giving explanations of this kind, the thinkers of the eighteenth century were moving round the above-mentioned vicious circle: environment creates man, man creates environment. For in effect, on the one hand, it appeared that the intellectual development of mankind, i.e., in other words the development of human nature, was due to social needs, and on the other it turned out that the development of social needs is to be explained by the development of human nature.

Thus we see that the French historians of the Restoration also failed to eliminate this contradiction: it only took a new form with them.

Chapter III

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Footnotes

[1] **Histoire des Republiques italiennes du moyen age**, Paris, t. I, Introduction, pp.v-vi.

[2] We translate the title of the article from the French, and hasten to remark in so doing that the article itself is known to us only from certain French extracts. We were unable to discover the original Italian text, as it was printed, so far as we know, only in one edition of Vico's works (1818); it is already missing from the Milan edition in six volumes of 1835. However what is important in the present case is not how Vice performed the task he had set himself, but *what task it was*.

We shall incidentally anticipate here one reproach which shrewd critics will probably hasten to level at us: "You indiscriminately make use of the term 'writers of the Enlightenment' and 'materialists', yet far from all the 'Enlighteners' were materialists; many of them, for example Voltaire, vigorously combated the materialists." This is so; but on the other hand Hegel demonstrated long ago that the writers of the Enlightenment who rose up against materialism were themselves only *inconsistent materialists*.

[3] He began working at the history of the Italian Republics in 1796.

[4] First edition appeared in 1821.

[5] **Essais** (dixieme edition). Paris. 1860, pp.73-74.

[6] **Ibid.**, pp.75-76.

[7] The struggle of religious and political parties in England in the seventeenth century "was a screen for the social question, the struggle of various classes for power and influence. True, in England these classes were not so sharply delimited and not so hostile to one another as in other countries. The people had not forgotten that powerful barons had fought not only for their own but for the people's liberty. The country gentlemen and the town bourgeois for three centuries sat together in parliament in the name of the English Commons. But during the last century great changes had taken place in the relative strength of the various classes of society, which had not been accompanied by corresponding changes in the political system ... The

bourgeoisie, country gentry, farmers and small landowners, very numerous at that time, had not an influence on the course of public affairs proportionate to their importance in the country. They had grown, but not been elevated. Hence in this stratum, as in other strata lying below it, there appeared a proud and mighty spirit of ambition, ready to seize upon the first pretext it met to burst forth". **Discours sur l'histoire de la revolution d'Angleterre**, Berlin, 1850, pp.9-10. Compare the same author's entire six volumes relating to the history of the first English Revolution, and the sketches of the life of various public figures of that time. Guizot there rarely abandons the viewpoint of the struggle of classes.

[8] **Dix ans d'études historiques**, the sixth volume of Thierry's Complete Works (10th ed.), p.66.

[9] [London, 1808, p.275].

[10] **De la feodalite des institutions de St.-Louis et de de l'influence de la legislation de ce prince**, Paris. 1822, pp.76-77.

[11] *Considerations sur l'histoire* in *Le Producteur*, Part IV.

[12] That is, with modern peoples only? This restriction is all the more Strange that already Greek and Roman writers had seen the close connection between the civil and political life of their countries, and agrarian relations. However, this strange limitation did not prevent Guizot making the fall of the Roman Empire depend upon its state economy. See his first "Essay": *Du regime municipal dans l'empire romain au V-me siecle de l'ere chretienne*.

[13] That is, landownership bore this or that *legal* character, or in other words its possession involved a greater or lesser degree of dependence, according to the strength and liberty of the landowner (**loc. cit.**, p.75).

[14] **Histoire de la conquete, etc.**, Paris, t.I, pp.296 et 300.

[15] It is interesting that the Saint-Simonists already saw this weak side of the historical views of Thierry. Thus, Bazard, in the article quoted earlier, remarks that conquest in reality exercised much less influence on the development of European society than Thierry thought. "Everyone understanding the laws of development of humanity sees that the role of conquest is quite subordinate." But in this case Thierry is closer to the views of his former teacher Saint-Simon than is Bazard: Saint-Simon examines the history of Western Europe from the fifteenth century from the view-point of the development of economic relations, but explains the social order of the Middle Ages merely as the product of conquest.

[16] **De la feodalite**, p.50.

[17] **Ibid.**, p.212.

[18] True, not always. Sometimes, in the name of the same nature, the philosophers advised the legislator "to smooth out the inequalities of property". This was one of the numerous contradictions of the French writers of the Enlightenment. But we are not concerned with this

here. What is important for us is the fact that the abstract “*nature of man*” was in every given case an argument in favour of the quite concrete aspirations of a definite stratum of society, and moreover, of *bourgeois* society.

[19] Grimm, **Correspondance Litteraire** for August, 1774. In putting this question, Grimm only repeats the idea of the Abbe Amaud, which the latter developed in a discourse pronounced by him at the French Academy.

[20] Suard, **loc. cit.**, p.383.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter III The Utopian Socialists

If human nature is invariable, and if, knowing its main qualities, we can deduce from them mathematically accurate principles in the sphere of morality and social science, it will not be difficult to invent a social order which would fully correspond to the requirements of human nature, and just for that very reason, would be an *ideal social order*. The materialists of the eighteenth century were already very willing to engage in research on the subject of *a perfect system of laws (legislation parfaite)*. These researches represent the *utopian element* in the literature of the Enlightenment. [1]

The Utopian Socialists of the first half of the nineteenth century devoted themselves to such researches with all their heart.

The Utopian Socialists of this age fully shared the anthropological views of the French materialists. Just like the materialists, they considered man to be the product of the social environment around him [2], and just like the materialists they fell into a vicious circle, explaining the variable qualities of the environment of man by the unchanging qualities of *human nature*.

All the numerous utopias of the first half of the present century represent nothing else than attempts to invent a perfect legislation, taking *human nature* as the supreme criterion. Thus, Fourier takes as his point of departure the analysis of human *passions*; thus, Robert Owen in his **Outline of the Rational System of Society** starts from the "*first principles of human nature*," and asserts that "rational government" must first of all "ascertain what human nature is"; thus, the Saint-Simonists declare that their

philosophy is founded on a new conception of human nature (*sur une nouvelle conception de la nature humaine*) [3]; thus, the Fourierists say that the social organization invented by their teacher represents a number of irrefutable deductions from the immutable laws of human nature. [4]

Naturally, the view of human nature as the supreme criterion did not prevent the various socialist schools from differing very considerably in defining the qualities of that nature. Thus, in the opinion of the Saint-Simonists, “the plans of Owen contradict to such an extent the inclinations of human nature that the sort of popularity which they, apparently, enjoy at the present time” (this was written in 1825) “seems at first glance to be inexplicable. [5] In Fourier’s polemical pamphlet, **Pièges et charlatanisme des deux sectes Saint-Simon et Owen qui promettent l’association et le progrès**, we can find a number of harsh statements that the Saint-Simonists’ teaching also contradicts all the inclinations of human nature. Now, as at the time of Condorcet, it appeared that to agree in the definition of human nature was much more difficult than to define a geometrical figure.

To the extent that the Utopian Socialists of the nineteenth century adhered to the view-point of *human nature*, to that extent they only repeated the mistakes of the thinkers of the eighteenth century—an error which was common, however, to all social science contemporary with them. [6] But we can see in them an energetic effort to break out of the narrow confines of an abstract conception, and to take their stand upon solid ground. Saint-Simon’s works are especially distinguished for this.

While the writers of the French Enlightenment very frequently regarded the history of humanity as a series of more or less happy, but chance occurrences [7], Saint-Simon seeks in history primarily *conformity to law*. The science of human society can and must become just as exact as natural science. We must study the facts of the past life of mankind in order to discover, in them the laws of its *progress*. Only he is capable of foreseeing the *future* who has understood the *past*. Expressing the task of social science in this way, Saint-Simon in particular turned to the study of the history of Western Europe since the fall, of the Roman Empire. The novelty and scope of his views can be seen from the fact that his pupil Thierry could practically effect a revolution in the study of French history. Saint-Simon was of the opinion that Guizot also borrowed his views from himself. Leaving this question of theoretical property undecided, we shall note that Saint-Simon was able to trace the mainsprings of the internal development of European societies further than his contemporary *specialist historians*. Thus, if both Thierry and Mignet, and likewise Guizot, pointed to property relations as the foundation of any social order, Saint-Simon, who most vividly and for the first time threw light on the history of these relations in modern Europe, went further and asked himself: why is it that precisely these, and no other relations, play such an important

part? The answer is to be sought, in his opinion, in the *requirements of industrial development*. “Up to the fifteenth century lay authority was in the hands of the nobility, and this was useful because the nobles were then the most capable industrialists. They directed agricultural works, and agricultural works were then the only kind of important industrial occupation.” [8] To the question of why the needs of industry have such a decisive importance in the history of mankind, Saint-Simon replied that it was because the object of social organization is production (*le but de l'organisation sociale c'est la production*). He attributed great significance to production identifying the useful with the productive (*l'utile, c'est la production*). He categorically declared that “*la politique ... c'est la science de la production.*”

It would seem that the logical development of these views should have brought Saint-Simon to the conclusion that the laws of production are those very laws by which in the last analysis social development is determined, and the study of which must be the task of the thinker striving to foresee the future. At times he, as it were, approaches this idea, but that only at times.

For production the implements of labour are necessary, These implements are not provided by nature ready-made, they are invented by man. The invention or even the simple use of a particular implement presupposes in the producer a certain degree of intellectual development. The development of “industry” is, therefore, the unquestionable result of the intellectual development of man-kind. It seems as though opinion, “enlightenment” (*lumières*) here also reign unchallenged *over* the world. And the more apparent the important role of industry becomes, the more is confirmed, seemingly, this view of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. Saint-Simon holds it even more consistently than the French writers of the Enlightenment, as he considers the question of the origin of ideas in sensations to be settled, and has less grounds for meditation on the influence of environment on man. The development of knowledge is for him the fundamental factor of historical advance. [9] He tries to discover the laws of that development; thus he establishes the law of three stages – *theological, metaphysical and positive* – which later on Auguste Comte very successfully gave out to be his own “discovery.” [10] But these laws, too, Saint-Simon explains in the long run by *the qualities of human nature*. “*Society consists of individuals,*” he says. “*Therefore the development of social reason can be only the reproduction of the development of the individual reason on a larger scale.*” Starting from this fundamental principle, he considers his “laws” of social development finally ascertained and proved when-ever he succeeds in discovering a successful analogy in the development of the individual confirming them. He holds, for example, that the role of *authority* in social life will in time be reduced to *zero*. [11] The gradual but incessant diminution of this role is one of the laws of development of humanity. How then does he prove this law? The main

argument in its favour is reference to the individual development of man. In the elementary school the child is obliged unconditionally to obey his elders; in the secondary and higher school, the element of *obedience* gradually falls into the background, in order finally to yield its place to *independent* action in maturity. No matter how anyone may regard the history of “authority,” everyone will nowadays agree that here, as everywhere, comparison is not proof. The embryological development of any particular *individual (ontogenesis)* presents many analogies with the history of the *species* to which this individual belongs: *ontogenesis* supplies many important indications about *phylogenesis*. But what should we now say of a biologist who would attempt to assert that the ultimate explanation of phylogenesis must be sought in ontogenesis? Modern biology acts in the exactly opposite way: it explains the embryological history of the *individual* by the history of the *species*.

The appeal to human nature gave a very peculiar appearance to all the “laws” of social development formulated both by Saint-Simon himself and by his followers.

It led them into the vicious circle. The history of mankind is explained by its nature. But what is the key to the understanding of the nature of man? History. Obviously, if we move in this circle, we cannot understand either the nature of man or his history. We can make only some individual, more or less profound, observations concerning this or that sphere of social phenomena. Saint-Simon made some very subtle observations, sometimes truly instinct with genius: but his main object – that of discovering a firm scientific foundation for “politics” – remained unattained.

“The supreme law of progress of human reason,” says Saint-Simon, “subordinates all to itself, rules over everything: men for it are only tools. And although this force [i.e., this law] arises from ourselves (*dérive de nous*), we can just as little set ourselves free from its influence or subordinate it to ourselves as we could at our whim change the working of the force which obliges the earth to revolve around the sun ... All we can do is consciously to submit to this law (our true Providence) realizing the direction which it prescribes for us, instead of obeying it blindly. Let us remark in passing that it is just in this that will consist the grand step forward which the philosophical intelligence of our age is destined to accomplish.” [12]

And so humanity is absolutely subordinated to the law of its own intellectual development; it could not escape the influence of that law, should it even desire to do so. Let us examine this statement more closely, and take as an example the law of the three stages. Mankind moved from theological thought to metaphysical, from metaphysical to positive. This law acted with the force of the laws of mechanics.

This may very well be so, but the question arises, how are we to understand the idea that mankind could not alter the workings of this law *should it even, desire to do so?* Does this mean that it could not have avoided metaphysics if it had even realized the

advantages of positive thinking while still at the end of the theological period? Evidently no; and if the answer is no, then it is no less evident that there is some lack of clarity in Saint-Simon's view of the conformity of intellectual development to law. Wherein lies this unclarity and how does it come about?

It lies in the *very contrasting of the law with the desire to alter its action*. Once such a desire has made its appearance among mankind, it becomes itself a fact in the history of mankind's intellectual development, and the law must embrace this fact, not come into conflict with it. So long as we admit the possibility of such a conflict, we *have* not yet made clear to ourselves the conception of law itself, and we shall inevitably fall into one of two extremes: either we shall abandon the standpoint of conformity to law and will be taking up the viewpoint of what is *desirable*, or we shall completely let the desirable – or more truly what was *desired* by the people of the given epoch – fall out of our field of vision, and thereby shall be attributing to *law* some mystical shade of significance, transforming it into a kind of Fate. "Law" in the writings of Saint-Simon and of the Utopians generally, to the extent that they speak of conformity to law, is just such a Fate. We may remark in passing that when the Russian "subjective sociologists" rise up in defence of "personality," "ideals" and other excellent things, they are warring precisely with the *utopian*, unclear, incomplete and therefore worthless doctrine of the "natural course of things." Our sociologists appear never even to have heard what constitutes *the modern scientific conception of the laws underlying the historical development of society*.

Whence arose the utopian lack of clarity in the conception of conformity to law? It arose from the radical defect, which we have already pointed out, in the view of the development of humanity which the Utopians held-and, as we know already, not they alone. The history of humanity was explained by the nature of man. Once that nature was fixed, there were also fixed the laws of historical development, all history was given *an sich*, as Hegel would have said. Man can just as little interfere in the course of his development as he can cease being man.. The *law* of development makes its appearance in the form of Providence.

This is historical fatalism resulting from a doctrine which considers the successes of knowledge – and consequently the conscious activity of man – to be the mainspring of historical progress.

But let us go further.

If the key to the understanding of history is provided by the study of the nature of man, what is important to me is not so much the study of the facts of history as the correct understanding of human nature. Once I have acquired the right view of the

latter, I lose almost all interest in social life *as it is*, and concentrate all my attention on social life *as it ought to be in keeping with the nature of man*. Fatalism in history does not in the least interfere with a utopian attitude to reality in practice. On the contrary, it promotes such an attitude, by breaking off the thread of scientific investigation. *Fatalism in general marches frequently hand in hand with the most extreme subjectivism*. Fatalism very commonly proclaims its own state of mind to be an inevitable law of history. It is just of the fatalists that one can say, in the words of the poet:

*Was sie den Geist der Geschichte nennen,
Ist nur der Herren eigner Geist. [3*]*

The Saint-Simonists asserted that the share of the social product which falls to the exploiters of another's labour, gradually diminishes. Such a diminution was in their eyes the most important law governing the economic development of humanity. As a proof they referred to the gradual decline in the level of *interest and land rent*. If in this case they had kept to the methods of strict scientific investigation, they would have discovered the economic causes of the phenomenon to which they pointed, and for this they would have had attentively to study production, reproduction and distribution of products. Had they done this they would have seen, perhaps, that the decline in the level of interest or even of land rent, if it really takes place, does not by any means prove of itself that there is a decline in the share of the property owners. Then their economic "law" would, of course, have found quite a different formulation. But they were not interested in this. Confidence in the omnipotence of the mysterious laws arising out of the nature of man directed their intellectual activity into quite a different sphere. A tendency which has predominated in history up to now can only grow stronger in the future, said they: the constant diminution in the share of the exploiters will necessarily end in its complete disappearance, i.e., in the disappearance of the class of exploiters itself. Foreseeing this, we must already today invent new forms of social organization in which there will no longer be any place for exploiters. It is evident from other qualities of human nature that these forms must be such and such ... The plan of social reorganization was prepared very rapidly: the extremely important scientific conception of the conformity of social phenomena to law gave birth to a couple of utopian recipes ...

Such recipes were considered by the Utopians of that day to be the most important problem with which a thinker was faced. This or that principle of political economy was not important in itself. It acquired importance in view of the practical conclusions which followed from it. J.B. Say argued with Ricardo about what determined the

exchange value of commodities. Very possibly this is an important question from the point of view of specialists. But even more important is it to know what *ought* to determine value, and the specialists, unfortunately, do not attempt to think about this. Let us think for the specialists. Human nature very clearly tells as so and so. Once we begin to listen to its voice, we see with astonishment that the argument so important in the eyes of the specialists is, in reality, not very important. We can agree with Say, because from his theses there follow conclusions fully in harmony with the requirements of human nature. We can agree with Ricardo too, because his views likewise, being correctly interpreted and supplemented, can only reinforce those requirements. It was in this way that utopian thought unceremoniously interfered in those scientific discussions the meaning of which remained obscure for it. It was in this way that cultivated men, richly gifted by nature, as for example *Enfantin*, resolved the controversial questions of the political economy of their day.

Enfantin wrote a number of studies in political economy which cannot be considered a serious contribution to science, but which nevertheless cannot be ignored, as is done up to the present day by the historians of political economy and socialism. The economic works of Enfantin have their significance as an interesting phase in the history of the development of socialist thought. But his attitude to the arguments of the economists may be well illustrated by the following example.

It is known that *Malthus* stubbornly and, by the way, very, unsuccessfully contested *Ricardo's* theory of rent. Enfantin believed that truth was, in fact, on the side of the first, and not of the second. But he did not even con-test Ricardo's theory: he did not consider this necessary. In his opinion all "discussions on the nature of rent and as to the actual relative rise or fall of the part taken by the property-owners from the labourer ought to be reduced to one question: what is the nature of those relations which ought in the interests of society to exist between the producer who has withdrawn from affairs" (that was the name given by Enfantin to the landowners) "and the active producer" (i.e., the farmer)? "When these relations become known, it will be sufficient to as-certain the means which will lead to the establishment of such relations; in doing so it will be necessary to take into account also the present condition of society, . but nevertheless any other question" (apart from that set forth above) "would be secondary, and would only impede those combinations which must promote the use of the above-mentioned means." [13]

The principal task of political economy, which Enfantin would prefer to call "*the philosophical history of industry*," consists in pointing out both the mutual relations of various strata of producers and the relation-ships of the whole class of producers. with the other classes of society. These indications must be founded on the. study of the historical development of the industrial class, and such a study must be founded on

“the new conception of the human race,” i.e., in other words, of human nature. [14]

Malthus’s challenge to Ricardo’s theory of rent was closely bound up with his challenge to the very well-known-as people now say-labour theory of value. Paying little attention to the substance of the controversy, *Enfantin* hastened to resolve it by a utopian addition (or; as people in Russia say nowadays, *amendment*) to Ricardo’s theory of rent: “If we understand this theory aright,” he says, “we ought, it seems to me, to add to it that ... the labourers pay (i.e., pay in the form of rent) some people for the leisure which those enjoy, and for the right to make use of the means of production.”

By labourers *Enfantin* meant here also, and even principally, the capitalist farmers. What he said of their relations with the landowners is quite true. But his “amendment” is nothing more than a sharper expression of a phenomenon with which Ricardo himself was well acquainted. Moreover, this sharp expression (Adam Smith sometimes speaks even more sharply) not only did not solve the question either of value or of rent, but completely removed it from *Enfantin*’s field of view. But for him these questions did not in fact exist. He was interested solely in the future organization of society. It was important for him to convince the reader that private property in the means of production *ought not* to exist. *Enfantin* says plainly that, but for practical questions of this kind, all the learned disputes concerning value would be simply disputes about words. This, so to speak, is the *subjective method* in political economy.

The Utopians never directly recommended this “method.” But that they were very partial to it is shown, among other ways, by the fact that *Enfantin* reproached Malthus (!) with excessive *objectivity*. Objectivity was, in his opinion, the principal fault of that writer. Who-ever knows the works of Malthus is aware that it is precisely objectivity (so characteristic, for example, of Ricardo) that was always foreign to the author of the **Essay on the Principle of Population**. We do not know whether *Enfantin* read Malthus himself (everything obliges us to think that, for example, the views. of Ricardo were known to him only from the extracts which the French economists made from his writings) ; but even if he did read them, he could hardly have assessed them at their true value, he would hardly have been able to show that real life was in contradiction to Malthus. Preoccupied with. considerations about what ought to be, *Enfantin* had neither the time nor the desire attentively to study what really existed. “You are right,” he was ready to say to the first sycophant he met. “In present-day social life matters proceed just as you describe them, but you are excessively *objective*; glance at the question from the humane point of view, and you will see that our social life must be rebuilt on new foundations.”

Utopian dilettantism was forced to make theoretical concessions to any more or less learned defender of the bourgeois order. In order to allay the consciousness rising

within him of his own impotence, the Utopian con-soled himself by reproaching his opponents with objectivity: let us admit you are more learned than I, but in return I am kinder. The Utopian did not refute the learned defenders of the bourgeoisie; he only made “footnotes” and “corrections” to their theories.

A similar, quite. utopian attitude to social science meets the eye of the attentive reader on every page of the works of our “subjective” sociologists. We shall have occasion yet to speak a good deal of such an attitude. Let us meanwhile quote two vivid examples.

In 1871 there appeared the dissertation by the late N. Sieber [4*]: **Ricardo’s theory of value and capital, in the light of later elucidations.** In his foreword the author benevolently, but only in passing, referred to the article of Mr. Y. Zhukovsky [5*]: *The school of Adam Smith and positivism in economic science* (this article appeared in the **Sovremennik** [6*] of 1864). On the subject of this passing reference, Mr. Mikhailovsky remarks:

“It is pleasant for me to recall that in my article *On the Literary Activity of Y. G. Zhukovsky* I paid a great and just tribute to the *services* rendered by our economist. I pointed out that Mr. Zhukovsky had long ago expressed the thought that it was necessary to return to the sources of political economy, which provide all the data for a correct solution of the main problems of science, data which have been quite distorted by the modern textbook political economy. But I then indicated also that the honour of priority in this idea, which later on proved so fruitful in the powerful hands of Karl Marx, belonged in Russian literature not to Mr. Zhukovsky, but to another writer, the author of the articles *Economic Activity and Legislation* (**Sovremennik**, 1859), *Capital and Labour* (1860), the **Comments on Mill**, etc. [7*] In addition to seniority in time, the difference between this writer and Mr. Zhukovsky can be expressed most vividly in the following way. If, for example, Mr. Zhukovsky circumstantially and in a strictly scientific fashion, even somewhat pedantically, proves that labour is the measure of value and that every value is produced by labour, the author of the above-mentioned articles, without losing sight of the theoretical aspect of the question, lays principal stress on the logical and practical conclusion from it: being produced and measured by labour, every value must belong to labour.” [15]

One does not have to be greatly versed in political economy to know that the “author of the **Comments on Mill**” entirely failed to understand the theory of value which later received such brilliant development “in the powerful hands of Marx.” And every person who knows the history of socialism understands *why* that author, in spite of Mr. Mikhailovsky’s assurances, did in fact “lose sight of the theoretical aspect of the question” and wandered off into meditations about the basis on which products *ought* to be exchanged in a well-regulated society. The author of the **Comments on Mill** regarded economic questions from the standpoint of a *Utopian*. This was quite natural at the time. But it is very strange that Mr. Mikhailovsky was unable to divest himself of

this point of view in the 70s (and did not do so even later, otherwise he would have corrected his mistake in the latest edition of his works) when it was easy to acquire a more correct view of things, even from popular works. Mr. Mikhailovsky did not understand what “the author of the **Comments on Mill**” wrote about value. This took place because he, too, “*lost sight of the theoretical aspect of the question*” and *wandered off into the “logical practical conclusion from it,”* i.e., the consideration that “every value ought to belong to labour.” We know already that their passion for practical conclusions always had a harmful effect on the theoretical reasoning of the Utopians. And how old is the “conclusion” which turned Mr. Mikhailovsky from the true path is shown by the circumstance that it was being drawn from Ricardo’s theory of value by the *English Utopians even of the 1820s*. But, as a Utopian, Mr. Mikhailovsky is not interested even in the history of utopias..

Another example. Mr. V.V., in 1882, explained in the following way the appearance of his book, **The Destinies of Capitalism in Russia**:

“The collection now offered to the reader consists of articles printed earlier in various journals. In publishing them as a separate book, we have brought them only into external unity, disposed the material in a somewhat different fashion and eliminated repetitions” (far from all: very many of them remained in Mr. V.V.’s book – *G.P.*). “Their content has remained the same; few new facts and arguments have been adduced; and if nevertheless we venture for a second time to present our work to the attention of the reader, we do so with one sole aim—by attacking his world-outlook with all the weapons at our command, to force the intelligentsia to turn its attention to the question raised” (an impressive picture: “Using *all the weapons* at his command,” Mr. V.V. attacks the world outlook of the reader, and the terrified intelligentsia capitulates, turns its attention, etc. – *G.P.*) “and to challenge our learned and professional publicists of capitalism and Narodism to study the law of the economic development of Russia—the foundation of all the other expressions of the life of the country. Without the knowledge of this law, systematic and successful social activity is impossible, while the conceptions of the immediate future of Russia which prevail amongst us can scarcely be called a law” (*conceptions ... can be called law?! – G.P.*) “and are hardly capable of providing a firm foundation for a practical world outlook” (*Preface, p. 1*).

In 1893 the same Mr. V.V., who had by now had time to become a “professional,” though, alas! still not a “learned” publicist of Narodism, turned out to be now very remote from the idea that the law of economic development constitutes “the foundation of all the other expressions of the life of the country.” Now “using all the weapons” he attacks the “world outlook” of people who hold such a “view”; now he considers that in this “view, the historical process, instead of being the creation of man, is transformed into a creative force, and man into its obedient tool” [16]; now he considers social relations to be “the creation of the spiritual world of man,” [17] and views with extreme suspicion the theory of the conformity to law of social phenomena, setting up against it “the scientific philosophy of history of Professor of History N.I. Kareyev [8*]” (hear, O

tongues, and be stilled, since the Professor himself is with us!). [9*] [18]

What a change, with God's help! What brought it about? Why, this. In 1882 Mr. V.V. was looking for the "law of the economic development of Russia," imagining that that law would be only the scientific expression of his *own* "ideals." He was even convinced that he had discovered such a "law" – namely, the "law" that Russian capitalism was stillborn. But after this he did not live eleven whole years in vain. He was obliged to admit; even though not aloud, that stillborn capitalism was developing more and more. It turned out that the development of capitalism had become all but the most unquestionable "law of the economic development of Russia." And lo, Mr. V.V. hastened to turn his "philosophy of history" inside out: he who had sought for a "law" began to say that such a search is quite an idle waste of time. The Russian Utopian is not averse to relying on a "law"; but he immediately renounces it, as Peter did Jesus, if only the "law" is at variance with that "ideal" which he has to support, not only for fear, but for conscience's sake. However Mr. V.V. even now has not parted company with the "law" for ever. "The natural striving to systematize its views ought to bring the Russian intelligentsia to the elaboration of an independent scheme of evolution of economic relations, appropriate to the requirements and the conditions of development of this country; and this task will be undoubtedly performed in the very near future" (**Our Trends**, p.114). In "elaborating" its "independent scheme," the Russian intelligentsia will evidently devote itself to the same occupation as Mr. V.V. when, in his **Destinies of Capitalism**, he was looking for a "law." When the scheme is discovered – and Mr. V.V. takes his Bible oath that it will be discovered in the immediate future – our author will just as solemnly make his peace with the principle of conformity to law, as the father in the Testament made his peace with his prodigal son. Amusing people! It is obvious that, even at the time when Mr. V.V. was still looking for a "law," he did not clearly realize what meaning this word could have when applied to social phenomena. He regarded "law" as the Utopians of the 20s regarded it. Only this can explain the fact that he was hoping to discover the law of development of *one* country – Russia. But why does he attribute his modes of thought to the Russian Marxists? He is mistaken if he thinks that, in their understanding of the conformity of social phenomena to law, they have gone no further than the Utopians did. And that he does think this, is shown by, all his arguments against it. And he is not alone in thinking this: the "Professor of History" Mr. Kareyev himself thinks this; and so do all the opponents of "Marxism." First of all they attribute to Marxists a utopian view of the conformity to law of social phenomena, and then strike down this view with more or less doubtful success. A real case of tilting at windmills!

By the way, about the learned "Professor of History." Here are the expressions in which he recommends the subjective view of the historical development of humanity:

“If in the philosophy of history we are interested in the question of progress, this very fact dictates the selection of the essential content of knowledge, its facts and their groupings. But facts cannot be either invented or placed in invented relations” (consequently there must be nothing arbitrary either in the selection or in the grouping? Consequently the grouping must entirely correspond to objective reality? Yes! Just listen! – *G.P.*) “and the presentation of the course of history from a certain-point of view will remain objective, in the sense of the truth of the presentation. Here subjectivism of another kind appears on the scene: creative synthesis may bring into existence an entire ideal world of norms, a world of what ought to be, a world of the true and just, with which actual history, i.e., the objective representation of its course, grouped in a certain way from the standpoint of essential changes in the life of humanity, will be compared. On the basis of this comparison there arises an assessment of the historical process which, however, must also not be arbitrary. It must be proved that the grouped facts, as we have them, really do have the significance which we attribute to them, having taken up a definite point of view and adopted a definite criterion for their evaluation.”

Shchedrin [10*] writes of a “venerable Moscow historian” who, boasting of his objectivity, used to say: “It’s all the same to me whether Yaroslav beat Izyaslav or Izyaslav beat Yaroslav.” Mr. Kareyev, having created for himself an “entire ideal world of norms, a world of what ought to be, a world of the true and just,” has nothing to do with objectivity of that kind. He sympathizes, shall we say, with Yaroslav, and although he will not allow him-self to represent his defeat as though it were his victory (“facts cannot be invented”), nevertheless he reserves the precious right of shedding a tear or two about the sad fate of Yaroslav, and cannot refrain from a curse addressed to his conqueror Izyaslav. It is difficult to raise any objection to *that* kind of “subjectivism.” But in vain does Mr. Kareyev represent it in such a colourless and therefore harmless plight. To present it in this way means not to understand its true nature, and to drown it in a stream of sentimental phraseology. In reality, the distinguishing feature of “subjective” thinkers consists in the, fact that for them the “world of what ought to be, the world of the true and just” stands outside any connection with the objective course of historical development: on one side is “*what ought to be,*” on the other side is “*reality,*” and these two spheres are separated by an entire abyss – that abyss which among the dualists separates the material world from the spiritual world. [11*] The task of social science in the nineteenth century has been, among other things, to build a bridge across this evidently bottomless abyss. So long as we do not build this bridge, we shall of necessity close our eyes to *reality* and concentrate all our attention on “*what ought to be*” (as the Saint-Simonists did, for example): which naturally will only have the effect of delaying the translation into life of this “*what ought to be,*” since it renders more difficult the forming of an accurate opinion of it.

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Footnotes

1. Helvetius, in his book, **De l'Homme**, has a detailed scheme of such “perfect system of laws.” It would be in the highest degree interesting and instructive to compare this utopia with the utopias of the first half of the nineteenth century. But unfortunately both the historians of socialism and the historians of philosophy have not up to now had the slightest idea of any such comparison. As for the historians of philosophy in particular, they, it must be said in passing, treat Helvetius in the most impermissible way. Even the calm and moderate Lange finds no other description for him than “the superficial Helvetius.” The absolute idealist Hegel was most just of all in his attitude to the absolute materialist Helvetius.

2. “Yes, man is only what omnipotent society or omnipotent education make of him, taking this word in it widest sense, i.e., as meaning not only school training or book education, but the education given us by men and things, events and circumstances, the education which begins to influence us from the cradle and does not leave us again for a moment.” Cabet, **Voyage en Icarie**, 1848 ed., p.402.

3. See **Le Producteur**, Vol.I, *Paris* 1825, Introduction.

4. “Mon but est de donner une *Exposition Élémentaire*, claire et facilement intelligible, de l'organisation sociale, déduite par Fourier des Lois de la nature humaine.” (V. Considérant, **Destinée, Sociale**, t.I, 3e édition, *Déclaration*.) “Il serait temps enfin de s'accorder sur ce point: est-il à propos, avant de faire des lois, de s'enquérir de la véritable nature de l'homme, afin d'harmoniser la loi, qui est par elle-même modifiable, avec la nature, qui est immuable et souveraine?” **Notions élémentaires de la science sociale de, Fourier, par l'auteur de la Défense du Fouriérisme** (Henri Gorse, Paris 1844, p.35). – “My aim is to give an *Elementary Exposition*, clear and easy to understand, of the social organization deduced by Fourier from the laws of human nature (V. Considerant, **Social Destiny**, Vol.I, 3rd ed., *Declaration*). It is high time we reached agreement on the following point: would not it be better, before making laws, to inquire into the real nature of man in order to bring the law, which is in itself modifiable, into harmony with Nature, which is immutable and supreme?”

5. **Le Producteur**, Vol.I, p.139.

6. We have already demonstrated this in relation to the historians of the Restoration. It would be very easy to demonstrate it also in relation to the economists. In defending the bourgeois social order against the reactionaries and the Socialists, the economists defended it precisely as the order most appropriate to human nature. The efforts to discover an abstract “law of population” – whether they came from the Socialists or the bourgeois camp – were closely bound up with the view of “human nature” as the basic conception of social science. In order to

be convinced of this, it is sufficient to compare the relevant teaching of Malthus, on the one hand, and the teaching of Godwin or of the author of the **Comments on Mill** [1*], on the other. Both Malthus and his opponents equally seek a single, so to speak absolute, law of population. Our contemporary political economy sees it otherwise: it knows that each phase of social development has *its own, particular, law* of population. But of this later.

7. In this respect the reproach addressed by Helvetius to Montesquieu is extremely characteristic: “In his book on the reasons for the grandeur and decadence of Rome, Montesquieu has given insufficient attention to the importance of happy accidents in the history of that state. He has fallen into the mistake too characteristic of thinkers who wish to explain everything, and into the mistake of secluded scholars who, forgetting the nature of men, at-tribute to the people’s representatives invariable political views and uniform principles. Yet often one man directs at his discretion those important assemblies which are called *senates*.” **Pensées et Reflexions**, CXL, in the third volume of his **Complete Works**, Paris MDCCCXVIII. Does not this remind you, reader, of the theory of “heroes and crowd” now fashionable in Russia? [2*] Wait a bit: what is set forth further will show more than once how little there is of originality in Russian “sociology.”

8. **Opinions litteraires, philosoplaiques et induslrielles**, Paris 1825, pp. 144-45. Compare also **Catechisrne politique des industriels**.

9. Saint-Simon brings the idealistic view of history to its last and extreme conclusion. For him not only are *ideas* (“principles”) the ultimate foundation of *social relations*, but among them “scientific ideas” – the “scientific system of the world” – play the principal part: from these follow religious ideas which, in their turn, condition the *moral conceptions of man*. This is *intellectualism*, which prevailed at the same time also among the German philosophers, but with them took quite a different form.

10. Littré strongly contested the statement of Hubbard when the latter pointed out this ... borrowing. He attributed to Saint-Simon only “the law of two stages”: theological and scientific. Flint, in quoting this opinion of Littré, remarks: “He is correct when he says that the law of three stages is not enunciated in any of Saint-Simon’s writings” (**The Philosophy of History in Europe**, Edinburgh and London MDCCCLXXIV, p.158). We shall contrast to this observation the following extract from Saint-Simon: “What astronomer, physicist, chemist and physiologist does not know that in every branch of knowledge the human reason, before proceeding from purely theological to positive ideas, for a long time has used metaphysics? Does there not arise in every one who has studied the history of sciences the conviction that this intermediate stage has been useful, and even absolutely indispensable to carry out the transition?” (**Du systeme industriel**, Paris MDCCCXXI, *Preface*, pp.vi-vii). The law of three stages was of such importance in Saint-Simon’s eyes that he was ready to explain by this means purely political events, such as the predominance of the “legists and metaphysicians” during the French Revolution. It would have been easy for Flint to “discover” this by carefully reading the works of Saint-Simon. But unfortunately it is *much easier to write a learned history of human thought than to study the actual course of its development*.

11. This idea was later borrowed from him and distorted by Proudhon, who built on it his theory of *anarchy*.
12. **L'Organisateur**, p.119 (Vol.IV of the **Works** of Saint-Simon, or Vol.XX of the **Complete Works** of Saint-Simon and Enfantin).
13. In his article, *Considérations sur la baisse progressive du loyer des objets mobiliers et immobiliers*, **Le Producteur**, Vol.I, p.564.
14. See in particular the article in **Le Producteur**, Vol.IV, *Considérations sur les progrès de l'économie politique*.
15. N.K. Mikhailovsky, **Works**, Vol. II, Second ed., St. Petersburg 1888, pp.239-40.
16. **Our Trends**, St. Petersburg 1893, p.138.
17. **Op. cit.**, pp.9, 13, 140, and many others.
18. **Ibid.**, p.143 *et seq.*

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Editorial Notes

- 1*. the author of **Comments on Mill** is N.G. Chernyshevsky, who devoted a number of pages to criticism of Malthusianism. (Cf. N.G. Chernyshevsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.IX, Goslitizdat Publishing House 1949, pp.251-334.)
- 2*. For the first time Mikhailovsky used the term “heroes and crowd” in his article of the same title, which he wrote in 1882. (Cf. N.K.Mikhailovsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.II, St. Petersburg 1907, pp.95-190.)
- 3*. “What they call the Spirit of History is only the spirit of these gentlemen themselves,” Goethe, *Faust*, Part I.
- 4*. *Sieber, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1844-1888), Russian economist, one of the first popularizers of Marx’s economic theory in Russia.
- 5*. *Zhukovsky, Yuly Galaktionovich* (1822-1907), bourgeois economist and publicist, opponent of Marxist political economy.
- 6*. **Sovremennik** – a political, scientific and literary monthly founded by A.S. Pushkin. It was published in St. Petersburg from 1836 to 1866. From 1847 it came under the editorship of A.A.

Nekrasov and I.I. Panayev. Among its contributors were the outstanding figures of Russian revolutionary democracy V.G. Belinsky, N.G. Chernyshevsky, N.A. Dobrolyubov and M.Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin. **Sovremennik** was the most progressive magazine of its time, the mouthpiece of the Russian revolutionary democrats. It was suppressed by the Tsarist government in 1866.

7*. The reference is to Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky.

8*. *Kareeyev, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1850-1931), Russian liberal historian and publicist, opponent of Marxism.

9*. This is a slightly changed phrase from the Manifesto issued by Nicholas I in 1848 in connection with the revolutions in Vienna, Paris and Berlin. The original phrase read: “Hear, O tongues and be stilled, since the Lord Himself is with us.” The Manifesto was intended to restrain the liberal elements in Russian society and to intimidate revolutionary Europe.

10*. *Shchedrin* – pen-name of M.Y. Saltykov (1829-1889), great Russian satirist and revolutionary democrat. The words of a “Moscow historian” freely rendered by Plekhanov (Shchedrin mentions Mstislav and Rostislav) are borrowed from Shchedrin’s **Modern Idyll** which describes the feuds of Russian dukes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

11*. As formulated by Mikhailovsky, dualism maintained the existence of two truths – “the truth of verity”, i.e. the truth of what actually is, and “the truth of justice” – what ought to be.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter IV Idealist German Philosophy

The materialists of the eighteenth century were firmly convinced that they had succeeded in dealing the death-blow to idealism. They regarded it as an obsolete and completely forsaken theory. But a reaction against materialism began already at the end of that century, and in the first half of the nineteenth century materialism itself fell into the position of a system which all considered obsolete and buried, once for all. Idealism not only came to life again, but underwent an unprecedented and truly brilliant development. There were, of course, appropriate social reasons for this: but we will not touch on them here, and will only consider whether the *idealism* of the nineteenth century had any advantages over the *materialism* of the previous epoch and, if it had, in what these advantages consisted.

French materialism displayed an astonishing and to-day scarcely credible feebleness every time it came upon questions of evolution in nature or in history. Let us take, for example, *the origin of man*. Although the idea of the *gradual evolution* of this species did not seem “*contradictory*” to the materialists, nevertheless they thought such a “guess” to be most improbable. The authors of the **Systeme de la Nature** (see Part I, ch.6) say that if anyone were to revolt against such a piece of conjecture, if anyone were to object “that Nature acts with the help of a certain sum of general and invariable laws,” and added in doing so that “man, the quadruped, the fish, the insect, the plant, etc., exist from the beginning of time and remain eternally unaltered” they “would not object to this.” They would only remark that such a view also does not contradict the truths they set forth. “Man cannot possibly know everything: he cannot know his origin” – that is all that in the end the authors of **the Systeme de la Nature** say about this important question.

Helvetius seems to be more inclined to the idea of the gradual evolution of man. "Matter is eternal, but its forms are variable" he remarks, recalling that even now human natures change under the influence of climate. [1] He even considered that generally speaking all animal species were variable. But this sound idea was formulated by him very strangely. It followed, in his view, that the causes of "dissimilarity" between the different species of animals and vegetables He *either* in the qualities of their very "embryos," *or* in the differences of their environment, the differences of their "upbringing." [2]

Thus *heredity* excludes *mutability*, and vice versa. If we adopt the theory of mutability, we must as a consequence presuppose that from any given "embryo" there can arise, in appropriate circumstances, any animal or vegetable: from the embryo of an oak, for example, a bull or a giraffe. Naturally *such* a "conjecture" could not throw any light on the question of the origin of species, and Helvetius himself, having once made it in passing, never returned to it again.

Just as badly were the French materialists able to explain phenomena of *social* evolution. The various systems of "legislation" were represented by them solely as the product of the conscious creative activity of "legislators"; the various religious systems as the product of the cunning of priests, etc.

This impotence of French materialism in face of questions of evolution in nature and in history made its philosophical content very poor. In its view of nature, that content was reduced to combating the one-sided conception of matter held by the *dualists*. In its view of man it was confined to an endless repetition of, and some variations upon, Locke's principle that *there are no innate ideas*. However valuable such repetition was in combating out-of-date moral and political theories, it could not have serious scientific value unless the materialists had succeeded in applying their conception to the explanation of the spiritual evolution of mankind. We have already said earlier that some very remarkable attempts were made in this direction by the French materialists (i.e., to be precise, by Helvetius), but that they ended in failure (and if they had succeeded, French materialism would have proved very strong in questions of evolution). The materialists, in their view of history, took up a purely idealistic standpoint—that *opinions govern the world*. Only at times, only very rarely, did materialism break into their historical reflections, in the shape of remarks that some stray atom, finding its way into the head of the "legislator" and causing in it a disturbance of the functions of the brain, might alter the course of history for entire ages. *Such* materialism was essentially *fatalism*, and left no room for the foreseeing of events, i.e., for the conscious historical activity of thinking individuals.

It is not surprising, therefore, that to capable and talented people who had not been drawn into the struggle of social forces in which materialism had been a terrible theoretical weapon of the extreme Left party this doctrine seemed *dry, gloomy, melancholy*. That was, for example, how Goethe [1*] spoke of it. In order that this reproach should cease to be deserved, materialism had to leave its dry and abstract mode of thought, and attempt to understand and explain "real life"

– the complex and variegated chain of concrete phenomena – from its own point of view. But in its then form it was incapable of solving that great problem, and the latter was taken possession of by *idealist philosophy*.

The main and final link in the development of that philosophy was the system of Hegel: therefore we shall refer principally to that system in our exposition.

Hegel called *metaphysical* the point of view of those thinkers – irrespective of whether they were idealists or materialists – who, failing to understand the process of development of phenomena, willy-nilly represent them to themselves and others as petrified, disconnected, incapable of passing one into another. To this point of view he opposed *dialectics*, which studies phenomena precisely in their development and, consequently, in their interconnection.

According to Hegel, dialectics is *the principle of all life*. Frequently one meets people who, having expressed some abstract proposition, willingly recognize that perhaps they are mistaken, and that perhaps the exactly opposite point of view is correct. These are well-bred people, saturated to their finger tips with “*tolerance*”: live and let live, they say to their intellect. Dialectics has nothing in common with the sceptical tolerance of men of the world, but it, too, knows how to reconcile directly opposite abstract propositions. Man is mortal, we say, regarding death as something rooted in external circumstances and quite alien to the nature of living man. It follows that a man has two qualities: first of being alive, and secondly of also being mortal. But upon closer investigation it turns out that *life* itself bears in itself the germ of *death*, and that in general any phenomenon is *contradictory*, in the sense that it develops out of itself the elements which, sooner or later, will put an ‘end to its existence and will transform it into its own opposite. Everything flows, everything changes; and there is no force capable of holding back this constant flux, or arresting this eternal movement. There is no force capable of resisting the dialectics of phenomena. Goethe personifies dialectics in the shape of a spirit [2*]:

*In Lebensfluthen, im Thatensturm,
Wall’ ich, auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff’ ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid. [3]*

At a particular moment a moving body is at a particular spot, but at the same time it is outside it as well because, if it were *only* in that spot, it would, at least for that moment, become

motionless. Every motion is a dialectical process, a living contradiction, and as there is not a single phenomenon of nature in explaining which we do not have in the long run to appeal to motion, we have to agree with Hegel, who said that *dialectics is the soul of any scientific cognition*. And this applies not only to cognition of nature. What for example is the meaning of the old saw: *summum jus, summa injuria*? Does it mean that we act most justly when, having paid our tribute to law, we at the same time give its due to lawlessness? No, that is the interpretation only of “surface thinking, the mind of fools.” The aphorism means that every abstract justice, carried to its logical conclusion, is transformed into injustice, i.e., into its own opposite. Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* serves as a brilliant illustration of this. Take a look at economic phenomena. What is the logical conclusion of “free *competition*”? Every capitalist strives to beat his competitors and to remain sole master of the market. And, of course, cases are frequent when some Rothschild or Vanderbilt succeeds in happily fulfilling this ambition. But this shows that free competition leads to monopoly, that is to the negation of competition, i.e., to its own opposite. Or look at the conclusion to which the so-called *labour principle of property*, extolled by our Narodnik literature, leads. Only that belongs to me which has been created by my labour. Nothing can be more just than that. And it is no less just that I use the thing I have created at my own free discretion: I use it myself or I exchange it for something else, which for some reason I need more. It is equally just, then, that I make use of the thing I have secured by exchange—again at my free discretion—as I find pleasant, best and advantageous. Let us now suppose that I have sold the product of my own labour for money, and have used the money to hire a labourer, i.e., I have bought somebody else’s labour-power. Having taken advantage of this labour-power of another, I turn out to be the owner of value which is considerably higher than the value I spent on its purchase. This, on the one hand, is very just, because it has already been recognized, after all, that I can use what I have secured by exchange as is best and most advantageous for myself: and, on the other hand, it is very unjust, because I am exploiting the labour of *another* and thereby negating the principle which lay at the foundation of my conception of justice. The property acquired by my personal labour bears me the property created by the labour of another. *Summum jus, summa injuria*. And such *injuria* springs up by the very nature of things in the economy of almost any well-to-do handicraftsman, almost every prosperous peasant. [4]

And so *every phenomenon, by the action of those same forces which condition its existence, sooner or later, but inevitably, is transformed into its own opposite.*

We have said that the idealist German philosophy regarded all phenomena from the point of view of their evolution, and that this is what is meant by regarding them *dialectically*. It must be remarked that the *metaphysicians* know how to distort the very doctrine of evolution itself. They affirm that neither in nature nor in history are there any leaps. When they speak of the *origin* of some phenomenon or social institution, they represent matters as though this phenomenon or institution was once upon a time very tiny, quite unnoticeable, and then gradually grew up.

When it is a question of *destroying* this or that phenomenon and institution, they presuppose, on the contrary, its gradual diminution, continuing up to the point when the phenomenon becomes quite unnoticeable on account of its microscopic dimensions. Evolution conceived of in this way explains absolutely nothing; it presupposes the existence of the phenomena which it has to explain, and reckons only with the *quantitative changes* which take place in them. The supremacy of metaphysical thought was once so powerful in natural science that many naturalists could not imagine evolution otherwise than just in the form of such a gradual increase or diminution of the magnitude of the phenomenon being investigated. Although from the time of Harvey it was already recognized that “*everything living develops out of the egg,*” no exact conception was linked, evidently, with such development from the egg, and the discovery of spermatozoa immediately served as the occasion for the appearance of a theory according to which in the seminal cell there already existed a ready-made, completely developed but microscopical little animal, so that all its “*development*” amounted to *growth*. Some wise sages, including many famous European evolutionary sociologists, still regard the “*evolution,*” say, of political institutions, precisely in this way: history makes no leaps: *va piano* (go softly) ...

German idealist philosophy decisively revolted against such a misshapen conception of evolution. Hegel bitingly ridiculed it, and demonstrated irrefutably that both in nature and in human society *leaps* constituted just as essential a stage of evolution as, gradual quantitative changes. “Changes in being,” he says, “consist not only in the fact that one quantity passes into another quantity, but also that quality passes into quantity, and vice versa. Each transition of the latter kind represents an *interruption in gradualness* (*ein Abbrechen des Allmählichen*), and gives the phenomenon a new aspect, qualitatively distinct from the previous one. Thus, water when it is cooled grows hard, not gradually ... but all at once; having already been cooled to freezing-point, it can still remain a liquid only if it preserves a tranquil condition, and then the slightest shock is sufficient for it suddenly to become hard ... In the world of moral phenomena ... there take place the same changes of quantitative into qualitative, and differences in qualities there also are founded upon quantitative differences. Thus, *a little less, a little more* constitutes that limit beyond which frivolity ceases and there appears something quite different, crime ... Thus also, states – other conditions being equal – acquire a different qualitative character merely in consequence of differences in their size. Particular laws and a particular constitution acquire quite a different significance with the extension of the territory of a state and of the numbers of its citizens.” [5]

Modern naturalists know very well how frequently changes of quantity lead to changes of quality. Why does one part of the solar spectrum produce in us the sensation of a red colour, another, of green, etc.? Physics re-plies that everything is due here to the number of oscillations of the particles of the ether. It is known that this number changes for every colour of the spectrum, rising from red to violet. Nor is this all. The intensity of heat in the spectrum increases in proportion to the approach to the external border of the red band, and reaches its

highest point a little distance from it, on leaving the spectrum. It follows that in the spectrum there are rays of a special kind which do not give light but only heat. Physics says, here too, that the qualities of the rays change in consequence of changes in the number of oscillations of the particles of the ether.

But even this is not all. The sun's rays have a certain chemical effect, as is shown for example by the fading of material in the sun. What distinguishes the violet and the so-called ultra-violet rays, which arouse in us no sensation of light, is their greatest chemical strength. The difference in the chemical action of the various rays is explained once again only by quantitative differences in the oscillations of the particles of the ether: *quantity passes into quality*.

Chemistry confirms the same thing. Ozone has different qualities from ordinary oxygen. Whence comes this difference? In the molecule of ozone there is a different number of atoms from that contained in the molecule of ordinary oxygen. Let us take three hydrocarbon compounds: CH₄ (marsh gas), C₂H₆ (dimethyl) and C₃H₈ (methyl-ethyl). All of these are composed according to the formula: n atoms of carbon and $2n+2$ atoms of hydrogen. If n is equal to 1, you get marsh gas; if n is equal to 2, you get dimethyl; if n is equal to 3, methyl-ethyl appears. In this way entire series are formed, the importance of which any chemist will tell you; and all these series unanimously confirm the principle of the old dialectical idealists that *quantity passes into quality*.

Now we have learned the principal distinguishing features of dialectical thought, but the reader feels himself unsatisfied. But where is the famous triad, he asks, the triad which is, as is well known, the whole essence of Hegelian dialectics? Your pardon, reader, we do not mention the triad for the simple reason that it *does not at all play in Hegel's work the part which is attributed to it* by people who have not the least idea of the philosophy of that thinker, and who have studied it, for example, from the "*text-book of criminal law*" of Mr. Spasovich. [6] Filled with sacred simplicity, these light-hearted people are convinced that the whole argumentation of the German idealists was reduced to references to the triad; that whatever theoretical difficulties the old man came up against, he left others to rack their poor "unenlightened" brains over them while he, with a tranquil smile, immediately built up a syllogism: all phenomena occur according to a triad, I am faced with a phenomenon, consequently I shall turn to the triad. [7] This is simply *lunatic nonsense*, as one of the characters of Karonin [3*] puts it, *or unnaturally idle talk*, if you prefer the expression of Shchedrin. Not once in the eighteen volumes of Hegel's works does the "*triad*" play the part of an *argument*, and anyone in the least familiar with his philosophical doctrine understands that it *could not play such a part*. With Hegel the triad has the same significance as it had previously with Fichte, whose philosophy is essentially different from the Hegelian. Obviously only gross ignorance can consider the principal distinguishing feature of one philosophical system to be that which applies to *at least two* quite different systems.

We are sorry that the “triad” has diverted us from our exposition: but, having mentioned it, we should reach a conclusion. So let us examine what kind of a bird it is.

Every phenomenon, developing to its conclusion, becomes transformed into its opposite; but as the new phenomenon, being opposite to the first, also is transformed in its turn into its own opposite, the third phase of development bears a *formal resemblance to the first*. For the time being, let us leave aside the question of the extent to which such a course of development corresponds to reality: let us admit for the sake of argument that those were wrong who thought that it does so correspond completely. But in any case it is clear that the “triad” only *follows* from one of Hegel’s principles: it does not in the least serve him as a main principle itself. This is a very essential difference, because if the triad had figured as a main principle, the people who attribute such an important part to it could really seek protection under its “authority”; but as it plays no such part, the only people who can hide behind it are maybe those who, as the saying has it, have heard a bell, but where they cannot tell.

Naturally the situation would not change one iota if, without hiding behind the “triad,” dialecticians “at the least danger” sought protection “behind the authority” of the principle that every phenomenon is transformed into its own opposite. But they never behaved in that way either, and they did not do so because the principle mentioned does not at all exhaust their views on the evolution of phenomena. They say in addition, for example, that in the process of evolution quantity passes into quality, and quality into quantity. Consequently they have to reckon both with the qualitative and the quantitative sides of the process; and this presupposes an attentive attitude to its *real course in actual fact*; and this means in its turn that they do not content themselves with *abstract conclusions from abstract principles* – or, at any rate, must not be satisfied with such contusions, if they wish to remain true to their outlook upon the world.

“On every page of his works Hegel constantly and tirelessly pointed out that philosophy is identical with the *totality of empirics*, that philosophy requires nothing so insistently as going deeply into the empirical sciences ... Material facts without thought have only a relative importance, thought without material facts is a mere chimera ... Philosophy is that *consciousness* at which the empirical sciences arrive relative to themselves. It cannot be anything else.”

That is the view of the task of the thinking investigator which *Lassalle* drew from the doctrine of Hegelian philosophy [8]: philosophers must be specialists in those sciences which they wish to help to reach “self-consciousness.” It seems a very far cry from the special study of a subject to thoughtless chatter in honour of the “triad.” And let them not tell us that Lassalle was not a “real” Hegelian, that he belonged to the “Left” and sharply reproached the “Right” with merely engaging in abstract constructions of thought. The man tells you plainly that he borrowed his view directly from Hegel.

But perhaps you will want to rule out the evidence of the author of the **System of Acquired Rights**, just as in court the evidence of relatives is ruled out. We shall not argue and contradict;

we shall call as a witness a quite extraneous person, the author of the **Sketches of the Gogol Period**. We ask for attention: the witness will speak long and, as usual, wisely.

“We follow Hegel as little as we follow Descartes or Aristotle. Hegel now belongs to past history; the present has its own philosophy and clearly sees the flaws in the Hegelian system. It must be admitted, however, that the principles advanced by Hegel were indeed very near to the truth, and this thinker brought out’ some aspects of the truth with truly astonishing power. Of these truths, the discovery of some stands to Hegel’s personal credit; others do not belong exclusively to his system, they belong to German philosophy as a whole from the time of Kant and Fichte; but nobody before Hegel had formulated them so clearly and had expressed them with such power as they were in his system.

“First of all we shall point to the most fruitful principle underlying all progress which so sharply and brilliantly distinguishes German philosophy in general, and the Hegelian system in particular, from the hypocritical and craven views that predominated at that time (the beginning of the nineteenth century) among the French and the English: ‘Truth is the supreme goal of thought; seek truth, for in truth lies good; whatever truth may be, it is better than falsehood; the first duty of the thinker is not to retreat from any results; he must be prepared to sacrifice his most cherished opinions to truth. Error is the source of all ruin; truth is the supreme good and the source of all other good.’ To be able to appraise the extreme importance of this demand, common to German philosophy as a whole since the time of Kant, but expressed with exceptional vigour by Hegel, one must remember what strange and narrow restrictions the thinkers of the other schools of that period imposed upon truth. They began to philosophize, only in order to ‘justify their cherished convictions,’ i.e., they sought not truth, but support for their prejudices. Each took from truth only what pleased him and rejected every truth that was unpleasant to him, bluntly admitting that a pleasing error suited him much better than impartial truth. The German philosophers (especially Hegel) called this practice of seeking not truth but confirmation of pleasing prejudices ‘subjective thinking,’” (Saints above! Is this, perhaps, why our subjective thinkers called Hegel a scholastic? – *Author*) “philosophizing for personal pleasure, and not for the vital need of truth. Hegel fiercely denounced this idle and pernicious pastime.” (Listen well!) “As a necessary pre-caution against inclinations to digress from truth in order to pander to personal desires and prejudices, Hegel advanced his celebrated ‘dialectical method of thinking.’ The essence of this method lies in that the thinker must not rest content with any positive deduction, but must find out whether the object he is thinking about contains qualities and forces the opposite of those which the object had presented to him at first sight. Thus, the thinker was obliged to examine the object from all sides, and truth appeared to him only as a consequence of a conflict between all possible opposite opinions. Gradually, as a result of this method, the former one-sided conceptions of an object were supplanted by a full and all-sided investigation, and a living conception was obtained of all the real qualities of an object. To explain reality became the paramount duty of philosophical thought. As a result, extraordinary attention was paid to reality, which had been formerly ignored and unceremoniously distorted in order to pander to personal, one-sided prejudices.” (*De te fabula narratur!*) “Thus, conscientious, tireless search for truth took the place of the former arbitrary interpretations. In reality, however, everything depends upon circumstances, upon the conditions of place and time, and therefore, Hegel found that the former general phrases by which good and evil were judged without an examination of the circumstances and causes that give rise to a given phenomenon, that these general, abstract aphorisms were unsatisfactory. Every object, every phenomenon has its own significance, and it must be judged according to the circumstances, the environment, in which it exists. This rule was expressed by the formula: ‘There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete,’ i.e., a definite

judgement can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances on which it depends.” [9]

And so, on the one hand, we are told that the distinguishing feature of Hegel’s philosophy was its most careful investigation of reality, the most conscientious attitude to any particular subject, the study of the latter in its living environment, with all those circumstances of time and place which condition or accompany its existence. The evidence of N.G. Chernyshevsky is identical in this case with the evidence of F. Lassalle. And on the other hand we are assured that this philosophy was empty scholasticism, the whole secret of which consisted in the sophistical use of the “triad.” In this case the evidence of Mr. Mikhailovsky is in complete agreement with the evidence of Mr. V.V., and of a whole legion of other modern Russian writers. How is this divergence of witnesses to be explained? Explain it any way you please: but remember that Lassalle and the author of the **Sketches of the Gogol Period** *did know* the philosophy they were talking about, while Messrs. Mikhailovsky, V.V., and their brethren have quite certainly not given themselves the trouble of studying even a single work of Hegel.

And notice that in characterizing dialectical thought the author of the **Sketches** did not say one word about the triad. How is it that he did not notice that same elephant, which Mr. Mikhailovsky and company so stubbornly and so ceremoniously bring out on view to every loafer? Once again please. remember that the author of the **Sketches of the Gogol Period** knew the philosophy of Hegel, while Mr. Mikhailovsky and Co. have not the least conception of it.

Perhaps the reader may be pleased to recall certain other judgements on Hegel passed by the author of the **Sketches of the Gogol Period**. Perhaps he will point out to us the famous article: *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Ownership of Land*? This article does speak about the triad and, to all appearances, the latter is put forward as the main hobby-horse of the German idealist. *But it is only in appearance*. Discussing the history of property, the writer asserts that in the third and highest phase of its development it will re-turn to its point of departure, i.e., that private property in the land and the means of production will yield place to social property. Such a return, he says, is a general law which manifests itself in every process of development. The author’s argument is in this case, in fact, nothing else than a reference to the triad. And in this lies its essential defect. *It is abstract*: the development of property is examined without relating it to concrete historical conditions-and therefore the author’s arguments are ingenious, brilliant, but not convincing. They only astound, surprise, but do not convince. But is Hegel responsible for this defect in the argument of the author of the *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices*? Do you really think his argument would have been abstract had he considered the subject just in the way in which, according to his own words, Hegel advised all subjects to be considered, i.e., keeping to the ground of reality, weighing all concrete conditions, all circumstances of time and place? It would seem that that would not be the case; it would seem that then there would not have been just that defect we have mentioned in the article. But what, in that event, gave rise to the defect? The fact that the author of the article *Criticism of*

Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Ownership of Land, in controverting the abstract arguments of his opponents, forgot the good advice of Hegel, and *proved unfaithful to the method* of that very thinker to whom he referred. We are sorry that in his polemical excitement he made such a mistake. But, once again, is Hegel to blame because in this particular case the author of *Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices* proved unable to make use of his method? Since when is it that philosophical systems are judged, not by their internal content, but by the mistakes which people refer-ring to them may happen to make?

And once again, however insistently the author of the article I have mentioned refers to the triad, even there he does not put it forward as the main hobby-horse of the dialectical method. Even there he makes it, not the foundation but, at most, an unquestionable consequence. The foundation and the main distinguishing feature of dialectics is brought out by him in the following words: “*Eternal change of forms, eternal rejection of a form brought into being by a particular content or striving, in consequence of an intensification of that striving, the higher development of that same content ...* – whoever has understood this great, eternal, ubiquitous law, whoever has learnt how to apply it to every phenomenon – ah, how calmly he calls into play the chance which affrights others,” etc.

“Eternal change of forms, eternal rejection of a form brought into being by a particular content” ... dialectical thinkers really do look on such a change, such a “rejection of forms” as a great, eternal, ubiquitous law. At the present time this conviction is not shared only by the representatives of some branches of social science who have not the courage to look truth straight in the eyes, and attempt to defend, albeit with the help of error, the prejudices they hold dear. All the more highly must we value the services of the great German idealists who, from the very beginning of the present century, constantly spoke of the eternal change of forms, of their eternal rejection in consequence of the intensification of the content which brought those forms into being.

Earlier we left unexamined “*for the time being*” the question of whether it is a fact that every phenomenon is transformed, as the German dialectical idealists thought, into its own opposite. Now, we hope, the reader will agree with us that, strictly speaking, this question need not be examined *at all*. When you apply the dialectical method to the study of phenomena, you need to remember that *forms change eternally in consequence of the “higher development of their content.”* You will have to trace this process of rejection of forms in all its fullness, if you wish to exhaust the subject. But whether the new form is the opposite of the old you will find from experience, and it is not at all important to know this beforehand. True, it is just on the basis of the historical experience of man-kind that every lawyer knowing his business will tell you that every legal institution sooner or later is transformed into its own opposite. Today it promotes the satisfaction of certain social needs; today it is valuable and necessary precisely in view of these needs. Then it begins to satisfy those needs worse and worse. Finally it is transformed into an *obstacle* to their satisfaction. From something *necessary* it becomes something *harmful* – and

then it is destroyed. Take whatever you like – the history of literature or the history of species – wherever there is development, you will see similar dialectics. But nevertheless, if someone wanted to penetrate the essence of the dialectical process and were to begin, of all things, with testing the idea of the *oppositeness* of the phenomena which constitute a series in each particular process of development, he would be approaching the problem from the wrong end.

In selecting the view-point for such a test, there would always turn out to be very much that was *arbitrary*. The question must be regarded from its objective side, or in other words one must make clear to oneself what is the inevitable change of forms involved in the development of the particular content? This is the same idea, only ex-pressed in other words. But in testing it in practice there is no place for arbitrary choice, because the point of view of the investigator is determined by *the very character of the forms and content themselves*.

In the words of Engels, Hegel's merit consists in the fact that he was the first to regard all phenomena from the point of view of their *development*, from the point of view of their origin and destruction. "Whether he was the first to do it is debatable," says Mr. Mikhailovsky, "but at all events he was not the last, and the present-day theories of development – the evolutionism of Spencer, Darwinism, the ideas of development in psychology, physics, geology, etc. – have nothing in common with Hegelianism." [10]

If modern natural science confirms at every step the idea expressed with such genius by Hegel, that quantity passes into quality, can we say that it had nothing in common with Hegelianism? True, Hegel was not the "*last*" of those who spoke of such a transition, but this was just for the very same reason that Darwin was not the "*last*" of those who spoke of the variability of species and Newton was not the "*last*" of the Newtonists. What would you have? Such is the course of development of the human intellect? Express *a correct idea*, and you will certainly not be the "*last*" of those who defend it; talk some *nonsense*, and although people have a great failing for it, you still risk finding yourself to be its "*last*" de-fender and champion. Thus, in our modest opinion, Mr. Mikhailovsky runs a considerable risk of proving to be the "*last*" supporter of the "subjective method in sociology." Speaking frankly, we see no reason to regret such a course of development of the intellect.

We suggest that Mr. Mikhailovsky – who finds "debatable" everything in the world, and much else – should refute our following proposition: that wherever the idea of evolution appears "in psychology, physics, geology, etc." it always has very much "in common with Hegelianism," i.e., in every up-to-date study of evolution there are invariably repeated some of the general propositions of Hegel. We say *some*, and not *all*, because many modern evolutionists, lacking the adequate philosophical education, understand "evolution" *abstractly* and *one-sidedly*. An example are the gentry, already mentioned earlier, who assure us that neither nature nor history makes any leaps. Such people would gain a very great deal from acquaintance with Hegel's *logic*. Let Mr. Mikhailovsky refute us: but only let him not forget that we cannot be refuted by

knowing Hegel only from the “text-book of criminal law” by Mr. Spasovich and from Lewes’s **Biographical History of Philosophy**. He must take the trouble to study Hegel himself.

In saying that the present-day teachings of the evolutionists always have very much “in common with Hegelianism,” we are not asserting that the present evolutionists have borrowed their views from Hegel. Quite the reverse. Very often they have just as mistaken a view of him as Mr. Mikhailovsky has. And if nevertheless their theories, even partially and just at those points where they turn out to be correct, become a new illustration of “Hegelianism,” this circumstance only brings out in higher relief the astonishing power of thought of the German idealist: people who never read him, by the sheer force of facts and the evident sense of “reality,” are obliged to speak as he spoke. One could not think of a greater triumph for a philosopher: *readers* ignore him, but *life* confirms his views.

Up to this day it is still difficult to say to what extent the views of the German idealists directly influenced German natural science in the direction mentioned, although it is unquestionable that in the first half of the present century even the naturalists in Germany studied philosophy during their university course, and although *such* men learned in the biological sciences as Haeckel speak with respect nowadays of the evolutionary theories of some nature-philosophers. But the philosophy of nature was the weak point of German idealism. Its strength lay *in its theories dealing with the various sides of historical development*. As for those theories, let Mr. Mikhailovsky remember – if he ever knew – that it was just from the school of Hegel that there emerged all that brilliant constellation of thinkers and investigators who gave quite a new aspect to the study of religion, aesthetics, law, political economy, history, philosophy and so forth. In all these “disciplines,” during a certain most fruitful period, there was not a single outstanding worker who was not indebted to Hegel for his development and for his fresh views on his own branch of knowledge. Does Mr. Mikhailovsky think that this, too, is “debatable”? If he does, let him just try.

Speaking of Hegel, Mr. Mikhailovsky tries “to do it in such a way as to be understood by people uninitiated in the mysteries of. the ‘philosophical nightcap of Yegor Fyodorovich’ as Belinsky disrespectfully put it when he raised the banner of revolt against Hegel.” [6*] He takes “for this purpose” two examples from Engels’s book **Anti-Dühring** (but why not from Hegel himself? That would be much more becoming to a writer “initiated into the mysteries,” etc.).

“A grain of oats falls in favourable conditions: it strikes root and thereby, *as such*, as a grain, is *negated*. In its place there arises a stalk, which is the *negation* of the grain; the plant develops and bears fruit, i.e., new grains of oats, and when these grains ripen, the stalk perishes: it was the *negation* of the grain, and now *it is negated* itself. And thereafter the same process of ‘negation’ and ‘negation of negation’ is repeated an endless number” (*sic!*) “of times. At the basis of this process lies *contradiction*: the grain of oats is a grain and at the same time *not* a grain, as it is always in a state of actual or potential development.”

Mr. Mikhailovsky naturally finds this “debatable.” And this is how this attractive *possibility* passes with him into *reality*.

“The first stage, the stage of the grain, is the thesis, or proposition; the second, up to the formation of new grains, is the antithesis, or contradiction; the third is the synthesis or reconciliation” (Mr. Mikhailovsky has decided to write in a popular style, and therefore leaves no Greek words without explanation or translation) “and all together they constitute a triad or trichotomy. And such is the fate of all that is alive: it arises, it develops and provides the origin of its repetition, after which it dies. A vast number of individual expressions of this process immediately rise up in the memory of the reader, of course, and Hegel’s law proves justified in the whole organic world (for the present we go no further). If however we regard our example a little more closely, we shall see the extreme superficiality and arbitrariness of our generalization. We took a grain, a stalk and once more a grain or, more exactly, a group of grains. But before bearing fruit, a plant flowers. When we speak of oats or some other grain of economic importance, we can have in view a grain that has been sown, the straw and a grain that has been harvested: but to consider that the life of the plant has been exhausted by these three stages is quite unfounded. In the life of a plant the point of flowering is accompanied by an extreme and peculiar straining of forces, and as the flower does not arise direct ‘from the grain, we arrive; even keeping to Hegel’s terminology, not at a trichotomy but at least at a tetrachotomy, a division into four: the stalk negates the grain, the flower negates the stalk, the *fruit* negates the flower. The omission of the moment of flowering is of considerable importance also in the following respect. In the days of Hegel, perhaps, it was permissible to take the grain for the point of departure in the life of the plant, and from the business point of view it may be permissible to do so even today: the business year does begin with the sowing of the grain. But the life of the plant does not begin with the grain. We now know very well that the grain is something very complex in its structure, and itself represents the product of development of the cell, and that the cells requisite for reproduction are formed precisely at the moment of flowering. Thus in the example taken from vegetable life not only has the point of departure been taken arbitrarily and incorrectly, but the whole process has been artificially and once again arbitrarily squeezed into the framework of a trichotomy.” [11]

And the conclusion is: “*It is about time we ceased to believe that oats grow according to Hegel.*” [7*]

Everything flows, everything changes! In our day, i.e., when the writer of these lines, as a student, studied the natural sciences, oats grew “according to Hegel,” while now “*we know very well*” that all that is nonsense: now “*nous avons changé tout cela.*” But really, do we quite “know” what “we” are talking about?

Mr. Mikhailovsky sets forth the example of a grain of oats, which he has borrowed from Engels, quite otherwise than as it is set forth by Engels himself. Engels says: “The grain as such ceases to exist, it is *negated*, and in its place appears the plant which has arisen from it, the negation of the grain. But what is the normal life-process of this plant? It grows, flowers, is fertilized and finally once more produces grains of oats [12], and as soon as these have ripened the stalk dies, is in its turn negated. As a result of this negation of the negation we have once again the original grain of oats, but not as a single unit, but ten-, twenty-, or thirty-fold.” [13]

For Engels the negation of the grain was the *entire plant*, in the cycle of life of which are included, incidentally, both *flowering* and *fertilization*. Mr. Mikhailovsky “negates” the word *plant* by putting in its place the word *stalk*. The stalk, as is known, constitutes *only part* of a plant, and naturally is *negated* by its other parts: *omnis determinatio est negatio*. But that is the very reason why Mr. Mikhailovsky “negates” the expression used by Engels, replacing it by his own: the stalk negates the grain, he shouts, the flower negates the stalk, the fruit negates the flower: there’s a tetrachotomy at least! Quite so, Mr. Mikhailovsky: but all that only goes to prove that in your argument with Engels you do not stop even at ... how shall I put it more mildly ... at the “*moment*” ... of *altering the words of your opponent*. This method is somewhat ... “subjective.”

Once the “moment” of substitution has done its work, the hateful triad falls apart. like a house of cards. You have left out the moment of flowering – the Russian “sociologist” reproaches the German Socialist – and “the omission of the moment of flowering is of considerable importance.” The reader has seen that the “moment of flowering” has been omitted not by Engels, but by Mr. Mikhailovsky in setting forth the views of Engels; he knows also that “omissions” of that kind in literature are given considerable, though quite negative, importance. Mr. Mikhailovsky here, too, had recourse to a somewhat unattractive “moment.” But what could he do? The “triad” is so hateful, victory is so pleasant, and “people quite uninitiated in the mysteries” of a certain “nightcap” are so gullible!

*We all are innocent from birth,
To virtue a great price we pin:
But meet such people on this earth
That truly, we can't help but sin ... [8*]*

The flower is an organ of the plant and, as such, as little negates the plant as the head of Mr. Mikhailovsky negates Mr. Mikhailovsky. But the “fruit” or, to be more exact, the fertilized ovum, is really the negation of the given organism being the point of departure of the development of a new life. Engels accordingly considers the cycle of life of a plant from the beginning of its development out of the fertilized ovum to its *reproduction* of a fertilized ovum. Mr. Mikhailovsky with the learned air of a connoisseur remarks: “The life of a plant does not begin with the grain. We now know very well, etc.”: briefly, we now know that the seed is fertilized during the flowering. Engels, of course, knows this just as well as Mr. Mikhailovsky. But what does this prove? If Mr. Mikhailovsky prefers, we shall replace *the grain* by *the fertilized seed*, but it will not alter the sense of the life-cycle of the plant, and will not refute the “triad.” The oats will still be growing “according to Hegel.”

By the way, supposing we admit for a moment that the “moment of flowering” overthrows all

the arguments of the Hegelians. How will Mr. Mikhailovsky have us deal with non-flowering plants? Is he really going to leave them in the grip of the triad? That would be wrong, because the triad would in that event have a vast number of subjects.

But we put this question really only in order to make clearer Mr. Mikhailovsky's idea. We ourselves still remain convinced that you can't save yourself from the triad even with "the flower." And are we alone in thinking so? Here is what, for example, the botanical specialist *Ph. Van Tieghem* says:

"Whatever be the form of the plant, and to whatever group it may belong thanks to that form, its body always originates in another body which existed before it and from which it separated. In its turn, at a given moment, it separates from its mass particular parts, which become the point of departure, the germs, of as many new bodies, and so forth. In a word it reproduces itself in the same way as it is born: by dissociation." [14]

Just look at that! A scholar of repute, a member of the Institute, a professor at the Museum of Natural History, and talks like a veritable Hegelian: it begins, he says, with dissociation and finishes up with it again. And not a word about the "moment of flowering"! We ourselves understand how very vexing this must be for Mr. Mikhailovsky; but there's nothing to be done – truth, as we know, is dearer than Plato.

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Footnotes

[1.](#) *Le vrai sens du système de la nature*, London 1774, p.15.

[2.](#) *De l'homme, Œuvres complètes de Helvétius*, Paris 1818, vol.II, p.120.

[3.](#) *In the tides of Life, in Action's storm,
A fluctuant wave,
A shuttle free,
Birth and the Grave,
An eternal sea,
A weaving, flowing,
Life, all-glowing,
Thus at Time's humming loom 'tis my hand prepares
The garment of Life which the Deity wears!
(Faust, Part I, Scene I (Bayard Taylor's translation.)*

4. Mr. Mikhailovsky thinks this eternal and ubiquitous supremacy of dialectics incomprehensible: everything changes except the laws of dialectical motion, he says with sarcastic scepticism. Yes, that's just it, we reply: and if it surprises you, if you wish to con-test this view, remember that you will have to contest the fundamental standpoint of modern science. In order to be convinced of this, it is sufficient for you to recall those words of Playfair which Lyell took as an epigraph to his famous work **Principles of Geology**: "Amid the revolutions of the globe, the economy of Nature has been uniform, and her laws are the only things that have resisted the general movement. The rivers and the rocks, the seas and the continents have been changed in all their parts; but the laws which direct these changes, and the rules to which they are subject, have remained invariably the same."

5. **Wissenschaft der Logik**, (Second ed., Leipzig 1932), Part I, Book 1, pp.383-84. – *Tr*:

6. "Aspiring to a barrister's career," Mr. Mikhailovsky tells us, "I passionately, though unsystematically, read various legal works. Among them was the text-book of criminal law by Mr. Spasovich. This work contains a brief survey of various philosophical systems in their relation to criminology. I was particularly struck by the famous triad of Hegel, in virtue of which punishment so gracefully becomes the reconciliation of the contradiction between law and crime. The seductive character of the tripartite formula of Hegel in its most varied applications is well known ... And it is not surprising that I was fascinated by it in the text-book of Mr. Spasovich. Nor is it surprising that thereupon it drew me to Hegel, and to much else ..." (**Russkaya Mysl**, 1891, Vol.III, part II, p.188). A pity, a very great pity, that Mr. Mikhailovsky does not tell us how far he satisfied his yearning "for Hegel." To all appearances, he did not go very far in this direction.

7. Mr. Mikhailovsky assures us that the late N. Sieber, when arguing with him about the inevitability of capitalism in Russia, "used all possible arguments, but at the least danger hid behind the authority of the immutable and unquestionable tripartite dialectical development" (**Russkaya Mysl**, 1892, Vol.VI, part II, p.196). He assures us also that all of what he calls Marx's prophecies about the outcome of capitalist development repose only on the "triad." We shall discuss Marx later, but of N. Sieber we may remark that we had more than once to converse with the deceased, and not once did we hear from him references to "dialectical development." He himself said more than once that he was quite ignorant of the significance of Hegel in the development of modern economics. Of course, everything can be blamed on the dead, and therefore Mr. Mikhailovsky's evidence is irrefutable.

8. See his **System der erworbenen Rechte** (Second ed.), Leipzig 1880, *Preface*, pp.xii-xiii.

9. Chernyshevsky, **Sketches of the Gogol Period of Russian Literature**, St. Petersburg, 1892, pp.258-59. In a special footnote the author of the **Sketches** magnificently demonstrates what is the precise meaning of this examination of all the circumstances on which the particular phenomenon depends. We shall quote this footnote too. "For example: 'Is rain good or bad?' This is an abstract question; a definite answer cannot be given to it. Sometimes rain is beneficial, sometimes, although more rarely, it is harmful. One must inquire specifically: 'After the grain was sown it rained heavily for five hours – was the rain useful for the crop?' – only here is the answer: 'that rain was very useful' clear and sensible. 'But in that very same summer, just when harvest time arrived, it rained in torrents for a whole week – was that good for the crop?' The answer: 'No, That rain was harmful,' is equally clear and correct. That is how all questions are decided by Hegelian philosophy. 'Is war disastrous or beneficial?'

This cannot be answered definitely in general; one must know what kind of war is meant, everything depends upon circumstances, time and place. For savage peoples, the harmfulness of war is less palpable, the benefits of it are more tangible. For civilized peoples, war usually does more harm than good. But the war of 1812, for example, was a war of salvation for the Russian people. The battle of Marathon [\[4*\]](#) was a most beneficial event in the history of mankind. Such is the meaning of the axiom: ‘There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete’ – a conception of an object is concrete when it presents itself with all the qualities and specific features and in the circumstances, environment, in which the object exists, and not abstracted from these circumstances and its living specific features (as it is presented by abstract thinking, the judgement of which has, there-fore, no meaning for real life).” [\[5*\]](#)

[10.](#) **Rasskoye Bogatstvo**, 1894, Vol.II, Part II, p.150.

[11.](#) **Ibid.**, pp. 154-57.

[12.](#) Engels writes, strictly speaking, of barley, not oats: but this is immaterial, of course,

[13.](#) **Anti-Dühring**, Moscow, 1954, p. 188. – *Ed.*

[14.](#) **Traité de Botanique** (2nd ed.), Paris 1891, Part 1, p.24.

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Editorial Notes

[1*](#). Of this Goethe wrote in **Wahrheit und Dichtung (Truth and Poetry)**: “Forbidden books, doomed to be burned, which caused such an uproar at the time, had no influence whatever on us. As an example I shall cite **Système de la Nature**, which we acquainted ourselves with out of curiosity. we could not understand how such a book could be dangerous; it seemed to us so gloomy, so Cimmerian, so deathlike, that it was difficult for us to endure it and we shuddered at it as at a spectre.”

[2*](#). Quotation from *Faust* by Goethe.

[3*](#). *Karonin, S.*, pseudonym of *Petropavlovsky, Nikolai Yelpidiforovich* (1853-1892), Russian narodnik wrtiter.

[4*](#). *The Battle of Marathon*, in which the Athenians beat the Persians in 490 B.C., pre-determined the favourable outcome of the Second Greek-Persian War for th3 Greeks and promoted the prosperity of Athenian democracy.

[5*](#). N.G. Chernyshevsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.III, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1947, p.208.

[6*](#). Belinsky wrote to Botkin on March 1, 1841, about Hegel’s philosophy: “My humble thanks, Yegor

Fyodorych, I bow to your philosophical nightcap, but with all due respect due to your philosophical philistinism I have the honour to inform you that if I managed indeed to climb to the highest rung of the ladder of development, I would even there request you to give me an account of all the victims of the conditions of life and of history, of all the victims of hazards, of superstition, the Inquisition, of Philip II and so on and so forth, otherwise I shall throw myself down head first from the top rung.” (Cf. V.G. Belinsky, selected Letters, vol.2, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1955, p.141.

7*. The article by Mikhailovsky from which this and the following quotation are taken, *On Dialectical Development and the Triple Formulae of Progress*, was included in his **Collected Works**, Vol.VII, St. Petersburg 1909, pp.758-80.

8*. Lines from Offenbach’s operetta *La Belle Hélène* (text by Meilhac and Halévy).

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter V Modern Materialism

The bankruptcy of the idealist point of view in explaining the phenomena of nature and of social development was bound to force, and really did force, *thinking* people (i.e., *not* eclectics, *not* dualists) to return to the materialist view of the world. But the new materialism could no longer be a simple repetition of the teachings of the French materialist of the end of the eighteenth century. Materialism rose again enriched by all the acquisitions of idealism. The most important of these acquisitions was the *dialectical method*, the examination of phenomena in their development, in their origin and destruction. The genius who represented this new direction of thought was *Karl Marx*.

Marx was not the first to revolt against idealism. The banner of revolt was raised by *Ludwig Feuerbach*. Then, a little later than Feuerbach, the *Bauer brothers* appeared on the literary scene: their views merit particular attention on the part of the present-day Russian reader.

The views of the Bauers were a reaction against Hegel's idealism. Nevertheless, they themselves were saturated through and through with a very superficial, one-sided and eclectic idealism.

We have seen that the great German idealists did not succeed in understanding the real nature or discovering the real basis of social relations. They saw in social development a necessary process, conforming to law, and in this respect they were quite right. But when it was a question of the prime mover of historical development, they turned to the Absolute Idea, the qualities of which were to give the ultimate and most profound explanation of that process. This constituted the weak side of ideal-ism, against which accordingly a philosophical revolution first broke out.

The extreme Left-wing of the Hegelian school revolted with determination against the “Absolute Idea.”

The Absolute Idea exists (if it exists at all) outside time and space and, in any case, outside the head of each individual man. Reproducing in its historical development the course of the logical development of the Absolute Idea, mankind obeys a force alien to itself, standing outside itself. In revolting against the Absolute Idea, the young Hegelians revolted first of all in the name of the independent activity of man, in the name of ultimate human reason.

“Speculative philosophy,” wrote Edgar Bauer, “is very mistaken when it speaks of reason as some abstract, absolute force ... Reason is not an objective abstract force, in relation to which man represents only something subjective, accidental, passing; no, the dominating force is man himself, his consciousness of self, and reason is only the strength of that consciousness. Consequently there is no Absolute Reason, but there is only reason which changes eternally with the development of consciousness of self: it does not exist at all in its final form, it is eternally changing.” [1]

And so there is no Absolute Idea, there is no abstract Reason, but there is only man’s consciousness, the ultimate and eternally changing human reason. This is quite true; against this even Mr. Mikhailovsky would not argue, although as we already know he can find anything “debatable” ... with more or less doubtful success. But, strangely enough, the more we underline this correct thought, the more difficult becomes our position. The old German idealists adapted the conformity to law of every process in nature and in history to the Absolute Idea. The question arises, to what will we adapt this conformity to law when we have destroyed its carrier, the Absolute Idea? Let us suppose that in relation to nature a satisfactory reply can be given in a few words: we adapt it to the qualities of matter. But in relation to history things are far from being as simple: the dominating force in history turns out to be man’s consciousness of self, eternally changing ultimate human reason. Is there any conformity to law in the development of this reason? Edgar Bauer would naturally have replied in the affirmative, because for him man, and consequently his reason, were not at all something accidental, as we have seen. But if you had asked the same Bauer to explain to you his conception of conformity to law in the development of human reason: if you had asked him, for example, why in a particular historical epoch reason developed in this way, and in another epoch in that way, practically speaking you would have received no reply from him. He would have told you that “eternally developing human reason creates social forms,” that “historical reason is the motive force of world history” and that consequently every particular social order proves to be obsolete as soon as reason makes a new step in its development. [2] But all these and similar assurances would not be a reply to the question, but rather a wandering around the question of why human reason takes new steps in its development, and why it takes them in this direction and not in that. Obligated by you to deal precisely with this question, E. Bauer would have hastily put it aside with some meaning-less reference to the qualities of the ultimate, eternally changing human reason, just as the old idealists con-fined themselves to a reference to the qualities of the Absolute Idea.

To treat reason as the motive force of world history, and to explain its development by some kind of special, immanent, internal qualities meant to transform it into something unconditional – or, in other words, to resurrect in a new form that same Absolute Idea which they had just proclaimed to be buried for ever. The most important defect of this resurrected Absolute Idea was the circumstance that it peacefully co-existed with the most absolute dualism or, to be more precise, even unquestionably presupposed it. As the processes of nature were not conditioned by ultimate, eternally changing human reason, two forces turned out to be in existence: in nature – matter, in history – human reason. And there was no bridge connecting the motion of matter with the development of reason, the realm of necessity with the realm of freedom. That was why we said that the views of Bauer were saturated through and through with a very superficial, one-sided and eclectic idealism.

“Opinion governs the world” – thus declared the writers of the French Enlightenment. Thus also spoke, as we see, the Bauer brothers when they revolted against Hegelian idealism. But if opinion governs the world, then the prime movers of history are those men whose thought criticizes the old and creates the new opinions. The Bauer brothers did in fact think so. The essence of the historical process reduced itself, in their view, to the refashioning by the “critical spirit” of the existing store of opinions, and of the forms of life in society conditioned by that store. These views of the Bauers were imported in their entirety into Russian literature by the author of the **Historical Letters** [1*] – who, by the way, spoke not of the critical “spirit” but of critical “thought,” because to speak of the spirit was prohibited by **Sovremennik**.

Once having imagined himself to be the main architect, the Demiurge of history, the “critically thinking” man thereby separates off himself and those like him into a special, higher variety of the human race. This higher variety is contrasted to the *mass*, foreign to critical thought, and capable only of playing the part of clay in the creative hands of “critically thinking” personalities. “*Heroes*” are contrasted to the “*crowd*.” However much the hero loves the crowd, however filled he may be with sympathy for its age-long needs and its continuous sufferings, he cannot but look down on it from above, he cannot but realize that everything depends upon him, the hero, while the crowd is a mass alien to every creative element, something in the nature of a vast quantity of ciphers, which acquire some positive significance only in the event of a kind, “critically thinking” entity condescendingly taking its place at their head. The eclectic idealism of the Bauer brothers was the basis of the terrible; and one may say repulsive, self-conceit of the “critically thinking” German “intellectuals” of the 1840s; today, through its Russian supporters, it is breeding the same defect in the intelligentsia of Russia. The merciless enemy and accuser of this self-conceit was Marx, to whom we shall now proceed.

Marx said that the contrasting of “critically thinking” personalities with the “mass” was nothing more than a caricature of the Hegelian view of history: a view which in its turn was only the speculative consequence of the old doctrine of the oppositeness of Spirit and Matter. “Already in Hegel the Absolute Spirit of history [3] treats the mass as material and finds its true

expression only in *philosophy*. But with Hegel the philosopher is only the organ through which the creator of history, the Absolute Spirit, arrives at self-consciousness by retrospection after the movement *has ended*. The participation of the philosopher in history is reduced to this retrospective consciousness, for the real movement is accomplished by the Absolute Spirit unconsciously [4], so that the philosopher appears *post festum*. Hegel is doubly inconsistent: first because while declaring that philosophy constitutes the Absolute Spirit's existence he refuses to recognize the real philosophical individual as the Absolute Spirit; secondly because according to him the Absolute Spirit makes history only *in appearance*. For as the Absolute Spirit becomes conscious of itself as the creative World Spirit only in the philosopher and *post festum*, its manufacture of history exists only in the opinion and conception of the philosopher, i.e., only in the speculative imagination. Mr. Bruno Bauer [5] eliminates Hegel's inconsistency. First, he proclaims Criticism to be the Absolute Spirit and himself to be Criticism. Just as the element of criticism is banished from the mass, so the element of the mass is banished from Criticism. Therefore Criticism sees itself embodied not in a *mass*, but in a small *handful* of chosen men, exclusively in Mr. Bauer and his followers. Mr. Bauer further does away with Hegel's other inconsistency. No longer, like the Hegelian spirit, does he make history *post festum* and in imagination. He *consciously* plays the part of the *World Spirit* in opposition to the mass of the rest of mankind; he enters in the present into a *dramatic* relation with that mass; he invents and carries out history with a purpose and after mature meditation. On one side stands the Mass, that *material*, passive, dull and unhistorical element of history. On the other side stand The Spirit, Criticism, Mr. Bruno and Co., as the active element from which arises all *historical* action. The act of social transformation is reduced to the *brain work* of Critical Criticism." [6]

These lines produce a strange illusion: it seems as though they were written, not fifty years ago, but some month or so ago, and are directed, not against the German Left Hegelians, but against the Russian "subjective" sociologists. The illusion becomes still stronger when we read the following extract from an article of Engels:

"Self-sufficient Criticism, complete and perfect in itself, naturally must not recognize history as it really took place, for that would mean recognizing the base mass in all its mass massiness, whereas the problem is to redeem the mass from massiness. History is therefore liberated from its massiness, and Criticism, which has a *free* attitude to its object, calls to history, saying: 'You ought to have happened in such and such a way?' All the laws of criticism have retrospective force: history behaved quite differently before the decrees of Criticism than it did after them. Hence mass history, the so-called *real* history, deviates considerably from *critical* history ..." [7]

Who is referred to in this passage? Is it the German writers of the 40s, or some of our contemporary "sociologists," who gravely discourse on the theme that the Catholic sees the course of historical events in one way, the Protestant in another, the monarchist in a third, the republican in a fourth: and that therefore a good subjective person not only can, but must, invent for himself, for his own spiritual use, such a history as would fully correspond to the best of

ideals? Did Engels really foresee our Russian stupidities? Not at all! Naturally, he did not even dream of them, and if his irony, half a century later, fits our subjective thinkers like a glove, this is to be explained by the simple fact that our subjective nonsense has absolutely nothing original in it: it represents nothing more than a cheap Suzdal [3*] print from a caricature of that same “Hegelianism” against which it wars so unsuccessfully ...

From the point of view of “Critical Criticism,” all great historical conflicts amounted to the conflict of *ideas*. Marx observes that *ideas* “were worsted” every time they did not coincide with the real economic interests of that social stratum which at the particular time was the bearer of historical progress. It is only the understanding of those interests that can give the key to understanding the true course of historical development.

We already know that the French writers of the Enlightenment themselves did not close their eyes to interests, and that they too were not averse to turning to them for an explanation of the given condition of a given society. But their view of the decisive importance of *interests* was merely a variation of the “formula” that opinions govern the world: according to them, the interests themselves depend on men’s opinions, and change with changes in the latter. *Such* an interpretation of the significance of interests represents the triumph of idealism in its application to history. It leaves far behind even German dialectical idealism, according to the sense of which men discover new material interests every time the Absolute Idea finds it necessary to take a new step in its logical development. Marx understands the significance of material interests quite otherwise.

To the ordinary Russian reader the historical theory of Marx seems some kind of disgraceful libel on the human race. G.I. Uspensky [4*], if we are not mistaken, in his **Ruin**, has an old woman, the wife of some official who even in her deathbed delirium obstinately goes on repeating the shameful rule by which she was guided all her life: “Aim at the pocket, the pocket!” The Russian intelligentsia naively imagines that Marx attributes this base rule to all mankind: that he *asserts* that, whatever the sons of man have busied themselves with, they have always, exclusively and consciously “*aimed at the pocket.*” The selfless Russian “intellectual” naturally finds such a view just as “disagreeable” as the theory of Darwin is “disagreeable” for some official dame who imagines that the whole sense of this theory amounts to the outrageous proposition that she, forsooth, a most respectable official’s lady, is nothing more than a monkey dressed up in a bonnet. In reality Marx slanders the “intellectuals” just as little as Darwin does official dames.

In order to understand the historical views of Marx, we must recall the conclusions at which philosophy and social and historical science had arrived in the period immediately preceding his appearance. The French historians of the Restoration came as we know to the conclusion that “civil conditions,” “property relations,” constitute the basic foundation of the entire social order. We know also that the same conclusion was reached, in the person of Hegel, by idealist German

philosophy – against its will, against its spirit, simply on account of the inadequacy and bankruptcy of the idealist explanation of history. Marx, who took over all the results of the scientific knowledge and philosophic thought of his age, completely agrees with the French historians and Hegel about the conclusion just mentioned. I became convinced, he said, that

“legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum-total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combines under the name of ‘civil society,’ that, however, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy.”

[5*]

But on what does the economy of the given society depend? Neither the French historians, nor the Utopian Socialists, nor Hegel have been able to reply to this at all satisfactorily. All of them, directly or indirectly, referred to human nature. The great scientific service rendered by Marx lies in this, that he approached the question from the diametrically opposite side, and that he regarded man’s nature itself as the eternally changing result of historical progress, the cause of which lies *outside* man. In order to exist, man must support his organism, borrowing the substances he requires from the *external nature surrounding him*. This borrowing presupposes a certain action of man on *that* external nature. But, “acting on the external world, he changes his own nature.” In these few words is contained the essence of the whole historical theory of Marx, although naturally, taken by themselves, they do not provide an adequate understanding of it, and require explanations.

Franklin called man “a tool-making animal.” The use and production of tools in fact does constitute the distinguishing feature of man. Darwin contests the opinion that only man is capable of the use of tools, and gives many examples which show that in an embryonic form their use is characteristic for many mammals. And he naturally is quite right from his point of view, i.e., in the sense that in that notorious “human nature” there is not a single feature which is not to be found in some other variety of animal, and that therefore there is absolutely no foundation for considering man to be some special being and separating him off into a special “kingdom.” But it must not be forgotten that *quantitative differences pass into qualitative*. What exists as an *embryo* in one species of animal can become the *distinguishing feature* of another species of animal. This particularly applies to the use of tools. An elephant breaks off branches and uses them to brush away flies. This is interesting and instructive. But in the history of the evolution of the species “*elephant*” the use of branches in the fight against flies probably played no essential part; elephants did not become elephants because their more or less elephant-like ancestors brushed off flies with branches. It is quite otherwise with man. [8]

The whole existence of the Australian savage depends on his boomerang, just as the whole existence of modern Britain depends on her machines. Take away from the Australian his boomerang, make him a tiller of the soil, and he of necessity will change all his mode of life, all

his habits, all his manner of thinking, all his “nature.”

We have said: make him *a tiller of the soil*. From the example of agriculture it can clearly be seen that the process of the productive action of man on nature presupposes not only the implements of labour. The implements of labour constitute only part of the means necessary for production. Therefore it will be more exact to speak, not of the development of the *implements of labour*, but more generally of the development of the *means of production*, the *productive forces* – although it is quite certain that the most important part in this development belongs, or at least belonged up to the present day (until important *chemical* industries appeared) precisely to the *implements of labour*.

In the implements of labour man acquires new organs, as it were, which change his anatomical structure. From the time that he rose to the level of using them, he has given quite a new aspect to the history of his development. Previously, as with all the other animals, it amounted to changes in his natural organs. Since that time it has become first of all *the history of the perfecting of his artificial organs, the growth of his productive forces*.

Man – *the tool-making animal* – is at the same time a *social animal*, originating in ancestors who for many generations lived in more or less large herds. For us it is not important at this point why our ancestors began to live in herds—the *zoologists* have to ascertain, and are ascertaining, this—but from the point of view of the philosophy of history it is extremely important to note that from the time the artificial organs of man began to play a decisive part in his existence, his social life itself began to change, in accordance with the course of development of his productive forces.

“In production, men not only act on nature but also on one another. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place.” [9]

The artificial organs, the implements of labour, thus turn out to be organs not so much of individual as of *social man*. That is why every essential change in them brings about changes in the social structure.

“These social relations into which the producers enter with one another, the conditions under which they exchange their activities and participate in the whole act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production. With the invention of a new instrument of warfare, fire-arms, the whole internal organization of the army necessarily changed; the relationships within which individuals can constitute an army and act as an army were transformed and the relations of different armies to one another also changed. Thus the social relations within which individuals produce, the social relations of production, change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces. The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and, specifically, a

society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character. Ancient society, feudal society, bourgeois society are such totalities of production relations, each of which at the same time denotes a special stage of development, in the history of mankind.” [10]

It is hardly necessary to add that the earlier stages of human development represent also no less distinct totalities of production relations. It is equally unnecessary to repeat that, at these earlier stages too, the state of the productive forces had a decisive influence on the social relations of men.

At this point we must pause in order to examine some, at first sight fairly convincing, objections.

The first is as follows.

No one contests the great importance of the implements of labour, the vast role of the forces of production in the historical progress of mankind – the Marxists are often told – but it was man who invented the implements of labour and made use of them in his work. You yourselves recognize that their use presupposes a comparatively very high degree of intellectual development. Every new step forward in the perfecting of the implements of labour requires new efforts of the human intellect. Efforts of the intellect are the *cause*, and the development of the productive forces the *consequence*. Therefore the intellect is the prime mover of historical progress, which means that those men were right who asserted that opinions govern the world, i.e., that human reason is the governing element.

Nothing is more natural than such an observation, but this does not prevent it from being groundless.

Undoubtedly the use of the implements of labour presupposes a high development of the intellect in the animal man. But see the reasons which modern natural science gives as an explanation for this development.

“Man could not have attained his present dominant position in the world without the use of his hands, which are so admirably adapted to act in obedience to his will,” says Darwin. [11] This is not a new idea: it was previously expressed by Helvetius. But Helvetius, who was never able to take his stand firmly on the viewpoint of evolution, was not able to clothe his own thought in a more or less convincing form. Darwin put forward in its defence an entire arsenal of arguments, and although they all naturally have a purely hypothetical character, still in their sum-total they are sufficiently convincing. What does Darwin say, then? Whence did quasi-man get his present, quite human hands, which have exercised such a remarkable influence in promoting the successes of his “intellect”? Probably they were formed in virtue of certain peculiarities of the *geographical environment* which made useful a physiological division of labour between the front and rear limbs. The successes of “intellect” appeared as the *remote*

consequence of this division and – again in favourable external circumstances – became in their turn the *immediate reason* for the appearance of man’s artificial organs, the use of tools. These new artificial organs rendered new services to his intellectual development, and the successes of “intellect” again reflected themselves upon the organs. We have before us a long process in which cause and consequence are constantly alternating. But it would be a mistake to examine this process from the standpoint of *simple interaction*. In order that man should take advantage of the successes already achieved by his “intellect” to perfect his artificial implements, i.e., *to increase his power over nature*, he had to be in a *certain* geographical environment, capable of providing him with (1) materials necessary for that perfecting, (2) the object the working up of which would presuppose perfected implements. Where there were no metals, the intellect of social man alone could not in any circumstances lead him beyond the boundaries of the “polished stone period”; and in just the same way in order to pass on to the pastoral and agricultural life he required certain fauna and flora, without which “intellect would have remained motionless.” But even this is not all. The intellectual development of primitive societies was bound to proceed the more quickly, the greater were the mutual connections between them, and these connections were, of course, the more frequent, the more varied were the geographical conditions of the localities which they inhabited, i.e., the less similar, consequently, were the products of one locality and those of another. [12] Lastly, all know how important in this respect are the natural means of communication. It was already Hegel who said that mountains divide men, while seas and rivers bring them together. [13]

Geographical environment exercises no less decisive an influence on the fate also of larger societies, the fate of states arising on the ruins of the primitive clan organizations.

“It is not the mere fertility of the soil, but the differentiation of the soil, the variety of its natural products, the changes of the seasons, which form the physical basis for the social division of labour, and which, by changes in the natural surroundings, spur man on to the multiplication of his wants, his capabilities, his means and modes of labour. It is the necessity of bringing a natural force under the control of society, of economizing, of appropriating or subduing it on a large scale by the work of man’s hand, that first plays the decisive part in the history of industry. Examples are, the irrigation works in Egypt, Lombardy, Holland, or in India and Persia where irrigation, by means of artificial canals, not only supplies the soil with the water indispensable to it, but also carries down to it, in the shape of sediment from the hills, mineral fertilizers. The secret of the flourishing state of industry in Spain and Sicily under the dominion of the Arabs lay in their irrigation works.” [14]

Thus *only thanks to certain particular qualities of the geographical environment could our anthropomorphic ancestors rise to that height of intellectual development which was necessary to transform them into tool-making animals. And in just the same way only certain peculiarities of the same environment could provide the scope for using in practice and constantly perfecting this new capacity of “tool-making.”* [8*] In the historical process of the development of productive forces, the capacity of man for “tool-making” must be regarded first of all as a

constant magnitude, while the surrounding external conditions for the use of this capacity in practice have to be regarded as *a constantly varying magnitude*. [15]

The difference in results (*the stages of cultural development*) achieved by various human societies is explained precisely by the fact that environment did not permit the various human tribes to make practical use to an equal extent of their capacity to “invent.” There is a school of anthropologists who trace the origin of the difference in results mentioned in the different qualities of *the races of man*. But the view of this school does not hold water: it is merely a new variation of the old method of explaining historical phenomena by references to “human nature” (or here, references to *racial nature*), and in its scientific profundity it has not gone very much farther than the views of Molière’s doctor, who sagely proclaimed that opium sends one to sleep because it has the quality of sending to sleep (a race is backward because it has the quality of backwardness).

Acting on external nature, man changes his own nature. He develops all his capacities, among them also the capacity of “tool-making.” *But at any given time the measure of that capacity is determined by the measure of the development of productive forces already achieved.*

Once an implement of labour has become an object of production, the very possibility – as well as the greater or lesser degree – of perfecting its manufacture entirely depends on the implements of labour with the help of which it is manufactured. This is comprehensible to any one even without explanation. But this is what, for example, may seem quite incomprehensible at first glance. Plutarch, when mentioning the inventions made by Archimedes during the siege of Syracuse by the Romans, finds it necessary to *apologize* for the inventor. It is, of course, indecent for a philosopher to occupy himself with things of this kind, he reflects, but Archimedes was justified by the extremity in which his country found itself. We ask, who would now think of seeking for circumstances which extenuate the guilt of Edison? We nowadays do not consider shameful – quite the opposite – the use by man in practice of his capacity for mechanical inventions, while the Greeks (or if you prefer the Romans), as you see, took quite a different view of this. Hence the course of mechanical discovery and invention among them was bound to proceed – and actually did proceed – incomparably more slowly than amongst ourselves. Here once again it might seem that *opinions govern the world*. But whence did the Greeks derive such a strange “opinion”? Its origin cannot be explained by the qualities of the human “intellect.” It remains only to recall their social relations. The societies of Greece and Rome were, as we know, societies of *slave-owners*. In such societies all physical labour, all the work of production, fell to the lot of the slaves. The free man was *ashamed* of such labour, and therefore naturally there was established a contemptuous attitude even to the most important inventions which bore on the processes of production-and among them to the mechanical inventions. That is why Plutarch looked on Archimedes in a very different way from that in which we now regard Edison. [16] But why was slavery established in Greece? Was it not because the Greeks, on account of some errors of their “intellect,” considered the slave-owning

order to be the best? No, it was not because of that. There was a time when the Greeks also had no slavery, and at that time they did not at all consider the slave-owning social order to be natural and inevitable. Later on, slavery arose among the Greeks, and gradually began to play a more and more important part in their life. Then the view of the citizens of Greece also changed: they began to defend slavery as a quite natural and unquestionably essential institution. But why, then, did slavery arise and develop among the Greeks? Evidently, for the same reason that it arose and developed in other countries as well, at a certain stage of their social development. And this reason is well known: it consists in the state of the productive forces. For, in fact, in order that it should be more profitable for me to make my conquered enemy into a slave, rather than into roast meat, it is necessary that the product of his unfree labour should be able to maintain not only his own existence but, at least in part, mine too: in other words, a certain stage of development of the productive forces at my disposal is essential. And it is precisely through this door that Slavery enters history. Slave labour is not very favourable to the development of the productive forces; in conditions of slavery it advances extremely slowly, but still it does advance. Finally there arrives a moment at which the exploitation of slave labour proves to be less advantageous than the exploitation of free labour. Then slavery is *abolished*, or gradually *dies out*. It is shown to the door by that same development of the productive forces which introduced it into history. [17] Thus we, returning to Plutarch, see that his view of Archimedes's inventions was conditioned by the state of the productive forces of his age. And as views of this kind undoubtedly have a vast influence on the further course of discovery and invention, we can say all the more that *for every given people, at every given period of its history, the further development of its productive forces is determined by their condition in the period under examination.* [9*]

Naturally, wherever we have to deal with inventions and discoveries, we deal also with "reason." Without reason discoveries and inventions would have been just as impossible as they were before man appeared on the earth. The teaching we are setting forth does not at all leave out of account the role of reason; it only tries to explain why reason at every given time *acted in this way, and not otherwise*; it does not despise the successes of reason, but only seeks to find a sufficient cause for them.

Lately another objection has begun to be made to the same teaching, and we shall leave Mr. Kareyev to set it forth:

"In course of time," says this writer, having more or less successfully expounded the historical philosophy of Engels, "Engels supplemented his view by new considerations which introduced an essential alteration. If previously he had recognized as the foundation of the material conception of history only the investigation of the economic structure of society, later on he recognized as equally important the study of family structure. This took place under the influence of new conceptions of the primitive forms of marriage and family relations, which forced him to take into account not only the process of the production of products but also the process of the reproduction of human generations. In this respect the influence came in part from Morgan's **Ancient Society** [10*]," etc. [18]

And so, if earlier Engels “recognized as the foundation of the material” (?) “conception of history the investigation of the economic structure of society,” later on, “having recognized as equally important,” etc., he, practically speaking, ceased to be an “economic” materialist. Mr. Kareyev sets forth this event in the tone of a dispassionate historian, while Mr. Mikhailovsky “skips and jumps” on the same subject; but both of them say essentially one and the same thing, and both repeat what before them was said by the extremely superficial German writer Weisengrün in his book, **Entwicklungsgesetze der Menschheit**. [11*]

It is quite natural that such a remarkable man as Engels, who during whole decades followed attentively the advance of science of his time, should very substantially “supplement” his basic view of the history of humanity. But there are supplements and supplements, as there are “*fagot et fagot*.” In this case the whole question is, did Engels *change his views* as a result of the “supplements” which were introduced in them? Was he really obliged to recognize, side by side with the development of “production,” the action of another factor, allegedly “equally important” with the first? It is easy for anyone to reply to this question who has even the least willingness to make an attentive and serious approach to it.

Elephants sometimes beat off flies with branches, says Darwin. We have remarked in this connection that nevertheless these branches play no essential part in the life of elephants, and that the elephant did not become an elephant because he used branches. But the elephant multiplies. The male elephant has a certain relationship with the female. The male and the female have a certain relationship with their young. It is clear that these relations have not been created by “branches”: they have been created by the general conditions of life of this species, conditions in which the role of a “branch” is so infinitely small that it can without error be equated to *zero*. But imagine that in the life of the elephant the branch begins to play a more and more important part, in the sense that it begins more and more to influence the structure of those general conditions on which depend all the habits of elephants, and in the long run their very existence. Imagine that the branch has acquired at length *a decisive* influence in creating these conditions. Then we shall have to recognize that it determines in the long run also the relations of the male elephant with the female and with his young. Then we shall have to recognize that there was a time when the “family” relations of elephants developed independently (in the sense of their relation with the branch), but that later on there came a time when those relations began to be determined by the “branch.” Will there be anything strange in such an admission? Absolutely nothing, except the strangeness of the very hypothesis that a branch might suddenly acquire a decisive importance in the life of the elephant. And we know ourselves that in relation to the elephant this hypothesis cannot but seem strange; but in application to the history of *man* things are different.

Man only gradually separated off from the animal world. There was a time when in the life of our anthropoid ancestors tools played just as insignificant a part as branches play in the life of the elephant. During this very long period, the relations between the anthropoid males and the

anthropoid females, just as the relations between each and their anthropoid young, were determined by the general conditions of life of this species, which bore no relation whatsoever to the *implements of labour*. On what did then depend the “family” relations of our ancestors? It is the naturalists who must explain this: the historian has as yet nothing to do in this sphere. But now the implements of labour begin to play a more and more important part in the life of man, the productive forces develop more and more, and there comes at length a moment when they acquire a decisive influence on the whole structure of social, and among them of family, relations. It is at this point that *the work of the historian* begins: he has to show how and why the family relations of our ancestors changed in connection with the development of their productive forces, how the family developed in accordance with economic relations. But obviously, once he sets about such an explanation, he has in studying the primitive family to reckon not only with economics: for people multiplied even before the implements of labour acquired their decisive significance in human life: even before this time there existed some kind of family relations which were determined by the general conditions of existence of the species *homo sapiens*. What then has the historian to do here? He will have, first of all, to ask for a service record of this species from the naturalist, who is passing over to him the further study of the development of man; and he will have secondly to supplement this record “out of his own resources.” In other words he will have to take the “family,” as it came into existence, shall we say, in the zoological period of the development of humanity, and then show what changes were introduced into it during the *historical* period, under the influence of the development of the productive forces, in consequence of changes in economic relations. That is all Engels says. And we ask: when he says this, is he in the least changing his “original” view of the significance of the productive forces in the history of humanity? Is he accepting, side by side with the working of this factor, the working of some other, “of equal importance”? It would seem that he is changing nothing, it would seem that he is accepting no such factor. Well, but if he is not, then why do Messrs. Weisengrün and Kareyev talk about a change in his views, why does Mr. Mikhailovsky skip and jump? Most probably because of their own thoughtlessness.

“But after all, it is really strange to reduce the history of the family to the history of economic relations, even during what you call the historical period,” shout our opponents in chorus. It may be strange, and maybe it is not strange: this is debatable, we shall say in the words of Mr. Mikhailovsky. And we don’t mind debating it with you, gentlemen, but only on one condition: during the debate behave seriously, study attentively the meaning of our words, don’t attribute to us your own inventions, and don’t hasten to discover in us contradictions which neither we nor our teachers have, or ever had. Are you agreed? Very well, let’s debate.

One cannot explain the history of the family by the history of economic relations, you say: it is narrow, one-sided, unscientific. We assert the contrary, and turn to the mediation of specialist investigators.

Of course you know the book of Giraud-Teulon: **Les origines de la famille**? We open this

book which you know, and we find in it for example the following passage:

“The reasons which brought about the formation within the primitive tribe” (Giraud-Teulon says, in point of fact, “within the horde” – *de la horde*) “of separate family groups are evidently connected with the growth in wealth of this tribe. The introduction into use, or the discovery, of some grain, the domestication of new species of animals, could be a sufficient reason for radical transformations in savage society: all great successes of civilization always coincided with profound changes in the economic life of the population” (p.138). [19]

A few pages further on we read:

“Apparently the *transition* from the system of female kinship to the system of male kinship was particularly heralded by conflicts of a juridical character on the basis of property right” (p.141).

And further on:

“The organization of the family in which male right predominates was everywhere aroused, it seems to me, by the action of a force as simple as elemental: *the right of property*” (p.146).

You know, of course, what significance in the history of the primitive family McLennan attributes to the killing of children of the female sex? Engels, as we know, has a very negative attitude to McLennan’s researches; but all the more interesting is it for us in the present case to learn the views of McLennan on the reason which gave rise to the appearance of infanticide, which allegedly exercised such a decisive influence on the history of the family.

“To tribes surrounded by enemies, and, unaided by art, contending with the difficulties of subsistence, sons were a source of strength, both for defence and in the quest for food, daughters a source of weakness.” [20]

What was it, then, that brought about, in McLennan’s opinion, the killing of children of the female sex by the primitive tribes? The insufficiency, of the means of existence, the weakness of the productive forces: if these tribes had enough food, probably they would not have killed their little girls merely out of fear that one day an enemy might come and possibly kill them, or take them away into captivity.

We repeat that Engels does not share McLennan’s view of the history of the family, and we too find it very unsatisfying; but what is important at this stage is that McLennan, too, shares in the sin with which Engels is reproached. He, too, seeks in the state of the productive forces the answer to the riddle of the history of family relations.

Need we continue our extracts, and quote from Lippert or Morgan? We see no need of this, for whoever has read them knows that in this respect they are just as great sinners as McLennan and Engels. Not without sin on this occasion, as is well known, is Herbert Spencer himself, although his sociological views have absolutely nothing in common with “economic

materialism.”

Of course it is possible to take advantage of this last circumstance for polemical purposes, and to say: there you are! So one can agree with Marx and Engels on this or that individual question, and not share their general historical theory! Of course one can. The only question is, on whose side will logic be.

Let us go further.

The development of the family is determined by the development of property right, says Giraud-Teulon, adding that all successes of civilization in general coincide with changes in the economic life of humanity. The reader probably has noticed himself that Giraud-Teulon is not quite precise in his terminology: his conception of “property right” is covered, as it were, by the conception of “economic life.” But after all, right is right, and economy is economy, and the two conceptions should not be mixed up. Where has this property right come from? Perhaps it arose under the influence of the economy of the given society (civil law always serves merely as the expression of economic relations, says Lassalle), or perhaps it owes its origin to some quite(different reason. Here we must continue the analysis, and not interrupt it precisely at the moment when it is becoming of particularly profound and most vital interest.

We have seen already that the French historians of the Restoration did not find a satisfactory reply to the question of the origin of property right. Mr. Kareyev, in his article *Economic Materialism in History*, deals with the German historical school of law. It will not be a bad thing for us also to recall the views of this school.

Here is what our professor says about it.

“When at the beginning of the present century there arose in Germany the so-called ‘historical school of law,’ [12*] which began to examine law not as a motionless system of juridical norms, as it was conceived of by previous jurists, but as something moving, changing, developing, there appeared in this school a strong tendency to contrast the ‘historical view’ of law, as the sole and exclusively correct view, with all other possible views in this sphere. The historical view never tolerated the existence of scientific truths applicable to all ages, i.e., what in the language of modern science are called general laws, and even directly denied these laws, and together with them any general theory of law, in favour of the idea that law depends on local conditions – a dependence which has always and everywhere existed, but does not exclude principles which are common to all nations.”

[21]

In these few lines there are very many ... how shall we put it? ... shall we say, inexactitudes, against which the representatives and supporter’s of the historical school of law would have raised a protest. Thus, for example, they would have said that, when Mr. Kareyev ascribes to them the denial of “what in the language of science are called general laws,” he either deliberately distorts their view, or else is confusing conceptions in a way most unbecoming a

“historiosophist,” mixing up those “laws” which fall within the scope of the history of law, and those which determine the historical development of nations. The historical school of law never dreamed of denying the existence of the second kind of law, and always tried to discover them, although its efforts were not crowned with success. But the very cause of its failure is extremely instructive, and if Mr. Kareyev were to give himself the trouble of thinking about it, perhaps – who knows – he too would make clear for himself, at last, the “*substance of the historical process.*”

In the eighteenth century people were inclined to explain the history of law by the action of the “legislator.” The historical school strongly revolted against this inclination. As early as 1814, Savigny formulated the new view in this way:

“The sum-total of this view consists of the following: every law arises from what in common usage, but not quite exactly, is called *customary law*, i.e., it is brought into being first of all by the custom and faith of the people, and only afterwards by jurisprudence. Thus it is everywhere created by internal forces, which act unnoticed, and not by the personal will of the legislator.” [22]

This view was later developed by Savigny in his famous work **System des heutigen römischen Rechts**.

“Positive law,” he says in this work, “lives in the general consciousness of a people, and therefore we have to call it *popular law* ... But this must not in any event be understood as meaning that law has been created by individual members of the people arbitrarily ... Positive law is created by the spirit of a people, living and acting in its individual members, and therefore positive law, not by accident but of necessity, is one and the same law in the consciousness of individual persons.” [23]

Savigny continues:

“If we consider the question of the origin of the State, we shall have in the same way to locate it in supreme necessity, in the action of a force building outward from within, as was shown earlier in the case of law in general; and this applies not only to the existence of the State in general, but also to that particular form which the State assumes in every individual nation.” [24]

Law arises in exactly the same “invisible way” as language, and it lives in the general consciousness of a people, not in the shape “of abstract rules, but in the shape of a living conception of institutions of law and in their organic connection, so that, when necessity arises, the abstract rule has to be formed in its logical shape from this general conception, by means of a certain artificial process (*durch einen künstlichen Prozess*). [25]

We are not interested here in the practical aspirations of the historical school of law; but as far as its *theory* is concerned, we can already say, on the basis of the words of Savigny here quoted, that it represents:

1. A reaction against the view held widely in the eighteenth century that law is created by the arbitrary will of individual persons (“Legislators”) ; and an attempt to furnish a scientific explanation of the history of law, to understand that history as a process which is necessary, and which, therefore, conforms to law.
2. An attempt to explain that process, starting from a completely *idealist point of view*: “the spirit of a people,” the “consciousness of a people,” is the final authority to which the historical school of law appealed.

Puchta expressed the idealist character of the views of this school even more sharply.

Primitive law, with Puchta, just as with Savigny, is customary law. But how does customary law arise? The opinion is often expressed that this law is created by everyday practice (*Uebung*), but this is only a particular case of the materialist view of the origin of popular conceptions.

“Exactly the opposite view is the right one: everyday practice is only the last moment, it only ex-presses and embodies the law which has arisen, and which lives in the conviction of the individuals belonging to the particular people. Custom influences conviction only in the sense that the latter, thanks to custom, becomes more conscious and more stable.” [26]

And so the conviction of a people concerning this or that legal institution arises independently of everyday practice, and earlier than “custom.” Whence does this conviction come from, then? It arises from the depth of the spirit of the people. The particular form this conviction takes with a particular people is to be explained by the particular features of the spirit of the people concerned. This is very obscure—so obscure that it does not contain any symptom of a scientific explanation. Puchta himself feels that things here are not quite satisfactory, and tries to put them right with an observation of this kind:

“Law arises by an imperceptible path. Who could take upon himself to trace those paths which lead to the origin of the given conviction, to its conception, its growth, its flourishing, its manifestation? Those who tried to do so, for the most part started from mistaken ideas.” [27]

“For the most part.” ... That means that there also existed investigators whose initial ideas were correct. To what conclusions, then, about the genesis of popular views on law did these persons arrive? We must suppose that this remained a secret for Puchta, because he does not go one step further than meaningless references to the qualities of the spirit of the people.

Nor is any explanation provided by the above-quoted remark of Savigny that law lives in the general consciousness of a people, not in the shape of abstract rules, but “in the shape of a living conception of legal institutions in their organic connection.” And it is not difficult to understand what it was that impelled Savigny to give us this somewhat muddled information. If we had presumed that law exists in the consciousness of a people “in the shape of abstract rules,” we should thereby in the first place have come up against the “general consciousness” of the jurists,

who know very well with what difficulty a people grasps these abstract rules, and secondly, our theory of the origin of law would have assumed a too incredible form. It would have appeared that before entering into any practical relations one with another, before acquiring any practical experience whatsoever, the men constituting the given people work out definite legal conceptions for themselves, and having laid in a store of these, as a tramp does of crusts, they set forth into the sphere of everyday practice, enter upon their historical path. Nobody, of course, would believe this, and so Savigny eliminates the “abstract rules”: law exists in the consciousness of the people not in the shape of definite conceptions, it represents, not a collection of already fully-shaped crystals, but a more or less saturated solution out of which, “when necessity for this arises,” i.e., when coming up against everyday practice, the required juridical crystals are precipitated. Such an approach is not without its ingenuity, but naturally it does not in the least bring us nearer to a scientific understanding of phenomena.

Let us take an example:

The Eskimos, Rink tells us, scarcely have any regular property; but in so far as it can be spoken of, he enumerates three forms which it takes:

“1. Property owned by an association of generally more than one family – e.g., the winter house ...

“2. Property, the common possession of one, or at most of three families of kindred – viz., a tent and everything belonging to the household, such as lamps, tubs, dishes of wood, soapstone pots; a boat, or *umiak*, which can carry all these articles along with the tent; one or two sledges with the dogs attached to them; ... the stock of winter provisions ...

“3. As regards personal property – i.e., owned by every individual ... his clothes ... weapons, and tools or what-ever was specially used by himself. These things were even regarded as having a kind of supernatural relation to the owner, reminding us of that between the body and the soul. Lending them to others was not customary.” [28]

Let us try and conceive of the origin of these three views of property from the standpoint of the old historical school of law.

As, in the words of Puchta, convictions precede every-day practice, and do not arise on the basis of custom, one must suppose that matters proceeded in the following way. Before living in winter houses, even before they began to build them, the Eskimos came to the conviction that one winter houses appeared among them, they must belong to a union of several families. In the same way, our savages convinced themselves that, once there appeared among them summer tents, barrels, wooden plates, boats, pots, sledges and dogs, all these would have to be the property of a single family or, at most, of three kindred families. Finally, they formed no less firm a conviction that clothes, arms and tools must constitute personal property, and that it would be wrong even to lend these articles. Let us add to this that probably all these “convictions” existed, not in the shape of abstract rules, but “in the shape of a living conception

of legal institutions in their organic connection,” and that out of this solution of legal conceptions there were precipitated – “when necessity for this arose,” i.e., as they encountered winter dwellings, summer tents, barrels, stone pots, wooden plates, boats, sledges and dogs – the norms of customary Eskimo law in their more or less “logical form.” And the qualities of the above-mentioned legal solution were determined by the mysterious qualities of the Eskimo spirit.

This is not a scientific explanation at all, but a mere “way of talking” – *Redensarten*, as the Germans say.

That variety of idealism which was maintained by the supporters of the historical school of law proved in its explanation of social phenomena to be even more fallacious than the much more profound idealism of Schelling and Hegel.

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Footnotes

1. Edgar Bauer, **Der Streit der Kritik mit Kirche and Staat**, Berne 1844, p.184.

2. **Loc. cit.**, p.185.

3. The same as the Absolute Idea.

4. The reader will not have forgotten the expression of Hegel quoted earlier: the owl of Minerva begins to fly only in the evening.

5. Bruno Bauer was the elder brother of Edgar, mentioned earlier, and the author of a book famous in its day, **Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker**.

6. F. Engels and K. Marx, **Die heilige Familie, oder Kritik der Kritischen Kritik. Gegen Bruno Bauer and Consorten**. Frankfurt am Main 1845, pp.126-28. This book is a collection of articles by Engels and Marx directed against various opinions expressed in the “Critical Criticism.” The passage quoted is taken from an article by Marx **[2*]** against an article by Bruno Bauer. It was also from Marx that the passage quoted in the preceding chapter (see pp.137-39 – *Ed.*) was taken.

[The passage is in chapter 6 – by Marx – of **The Holy Family (Gesamtausgabe**, Part I, Vol.3, pp.267-58). – *Tr.*]

7. **Ibid.**, p.21.

8. “So thoroughly is the use of tools the exclusive attribute of man that the discovery of a single artificially-shaped flint in the drift or cave-breccia is deemed proof enough that man has been there.” Daniel Wilson, **Prehistoric Man**, Vol.I, London 1876, pp. 151-52.

9. K. Marx, **Wage Labour and Capital** in K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, Vol.I, Moscow 1955, p.89. – *Ed.*

10. *Ibid.*, pp.89-90. – *Ed.*

11. Charles Darwin, **The Descent of Man**, London 1875, p.51.

12. In the well-known book of von Martius, on the primitive inhabitants of Brazil [6*], several interesting examples can be found which show how important are what seem to be the most insignificant peculiarities of various localities, in developing mutual relations between their inhabitants.

13. However, it must be observed about the sea that it does not always bring men together, Ratzel (**Anthropo-Geographie**, Stuttgart, 1882, p.92) justly remarks that at a certain low stage of development the sea is an *absolute* frontier, i.e., it renders impossible any relations whatsoever between the peoples it divides. For their part, relations which are made possible originally only by the characteristics of geographical environment leave their impression on the physiognomy of primitive tribes. Islanders are markedly distinguished from those dwelling on continents.

“Die Bevölkerungen der Inseln sind in einigen Fällen völlig andere als die des nächst gelegenen Festlandes oder der nächsten grösseren Insel; aber auch wo sie ursprünglich derselben Rasse oder Völkergruppe angehören, sind sie immer weit von der selben verschieden; and zwar, kann man hinzusetzen, in der Regel weiter als die entsprechenden festländischen Abzweigungen dieser Rasse oder Gruppe untereinander” (Ratzel, **loc. cit.**, p.96). (“The inhabitants of islands are in some cases totally different from those of the nearest mainland or the nearest larger island; but even where they originally belonged to the same race or group of peoples, they are always widely different from the latter; and indeed one can add, as a rule, that they differ more widely than do the corresponding branches of this race or group on the mainland among themselves.” p.96. – *Ed.*) Here is repeated the same law as in the formation of the species and varieties of animals.

14. Marx, **Das Kapital** (3rd ed.), pp.524-526. [7*] In a footnote Marx adds: “One of the material bases of the power of the State over the small disconnected producing organisms in India, was the regulation of the water supply. The Mohammedan rulers of India understood this better than their English successors.” We may compare with the opinion of Marx, quoted above, the opinion of a most recent investigator: “Unter dem, was die lebende Natur dem Menschen an Gaben bietet, ist nicht der Reichtum an Stoffen, sondern der an Kräften oder, besser gesagt, Kräfteanregungen am höchsten zu schätzen” (Ratzel, **loc. cit.**, p.343). [“Among the gifts which living Nature offers to men, that to be prized most highly is not material wealth, but energy, or rather the means of producing energy” (Ratzel, **loc. cit.**, p.343).]

15. “We must beware,” says L. Geiger, “of ascribing to premeditation too great a part in the origin of implements. The discovery of the first implements of the highest importance took place, of course, by accident, like many great discoveries of modern times. They were of course rather discovered than invented. I arrived at this view in particular on account of the circumstance that the names of

‘implements never arise from their manufacture, that those names never have a genetic character, but arise from the use which is made of the implement. Thus, in the German language *Scheere* (scissors), *Säge* (saw), *Hacke* (pick-axe) are objects which shear (*scheeren*), saw (*sägen*), hack (*hacken*). This law of language must all the more attract our attention because the names of devices which do not represent tools are formed by a genetic or passive method, from the material or from the work of which or thanks to which they arise. Thus, a skin as a receptacle for wine in many languages originally means the skin torn off an animal: to the German *Schlauch* corresponds the English slough (snakeskin): the Greek *ascós* is simultaneously a skin in the sense of receptacle, and the skin of a beast. Here, consequently, language shows us quite evidently how and out of what was manufactured the device called a skin. It is otherwise in relation to implements; and they at first – if we base ourselves on language – were not manufactured at all. Thus the first knife could be found by accident, and I would say made use of in play, in the shape of a sharpened stone.” L. Geiger, **Die Urgeschichte der Menschheit im Lichte der Sprache, mit besonderer Beziehung auf die Entstehung des Werkzeugs**, pp.36-37 (in the collection **Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit**, Stuttgart 1878).

16. “For the art of mechanics ... was first originated by Eudoxus and Archytas, who embellished geometry with its subtleties, and gave to problems incapable of proof by word and diagram a support derived from mechanical illustrations that were patent to the senses ... But Plato was incensed at this, and inveighed against them as corrupters and destroyers of the pure excellence of geometry, which thus turned her back upon the incorporeal things of abstract thought and descended to the things of sense, making use, moreover, of objects which required much mean and manual labour. For this reason mechanics was made entirely distinct from geometry, and being for a long time ignored by philosophers came to be regarded as one of the military arts” (Plutarchi, **Vita Marcelli**, edit. Teubneriana, C. Sintenis, Lipsiae 1883, Ch.XIV, pp.135-36). As the reader will see, Plutarch’s view was far from new at that time.

17. It is known that for a long time the Russian peasants themselves could have, and not infrequently did have, their own serfs. The condition of a serf could not be attractive to a peasant. But in the then state of the productive forces of Russia not a single peasant could find that condition abnormal. A “*muzhik*” who had made some money just as naturally began to think about buying serfs as a Roman freeman strove to acquire slaves. The slaves who revolted under the leadership of Spartacus waged war with their lords, but not with slavery; if they had succeeded in winning their freedom, they would themselves, in favourable circumstances, and with the most tranquil conscience, have become slave-owners. Willy nilly one recalls at this point the words of Schelling, which acquire a new meaning, that *freedom must be necessary*. History shows that any of the forms of freedom makes its appearance only where it becomes an economic necessity.

18. See *Economic Materialism in History*, in **Vestnik Yevropy**, August 1894, p.601.

19. We quote from the French edition of 1874.

20. J.F. McLennan, **Studies in Ancient History: Primitive Marriage**, 1876, p.111.

21. **Vestnik Yevropy**, July 1894, p.12.

22. Friedrich Karl von Savigny, **Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung and Rechtswissenschaft**,

3rd ed., Heidelberg 1840, p.14. The first edition appeared in 1814.

23. Berlin edition, 1840, Vol.I, p.14.

24. *Ibid.*, p.22.

25. *Ibid.*, p.16.

26. **Cursus der Institutionen**, Leipzig, 1841, Vol.1, p 31. In a footnote Puchta speaks sharply of the eclectics who strive to reconcile contradictory views of the origin of law, and uses such expressions that willy-nilly the question arises: can he possibly have anticipated the appearance of Mr. Kareyev? But on the other hand it must be said that in Germany at the time of Puchta they had quite enough eclectics of their own. Whatever else there may be a shortage of, there are always and everywhere inexhaustible reserves of that type of mind.

27. *Ibid.*, p, 28.

28. H.J. Rink, **Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo**, 1875, pp.9-10, 30.

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Editorial Notes

1*. **Historical Letters** was written by P. Lavrov and published in St. Petersburg in 1870 under the pen-name P.L. Mirtov.

2*. K. Marx and F. Engels, **The Holy Family**, Moscow 1956, pp.115-117.

3*. *Suzdal* – from the Suzdal locality in Russia, where icon painting was widespread. Icon prints produced in Suzdal in great quantities were cheap and unartistic. Hence, the adjective Suzdal has come to denote something that is cheap and unartistic.

4*. *Uspensky, Gleb Ivanovich* (1843-1902), prominent Russian writer, revolutionary democrat.

5*. K. Marx, *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.362.

6*. Plekhanov's reference here is to Martius's book **Von dem Rechtszustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens**, Munich 1832.

7*. Karl Marx, **Capital**, vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.513.

8*. Plekhanov's arguments about the significance of the geographical environment in social progress

cannot be regarded as absolutely correct. In his later works Plekhanov even speaks of the determining influence of the geographical environment on the entire course of social progress.

While pointing out quite rightly that the geographical environment influences man through social relations, that the latter, once they have arisen, develop in conformity with their inner laws, Plekhanov is mistaken when he says that social structure “is determined in the long run by the characteristics of the geographical environment” and that “the capacity of man for tool-making must be regarded first of all as *a constant magnitude*, while the surrounding external conditions for the use of this capacity in practice have to be regarded as *a constantly varying magnitude*”.

Geographical environment is unquestionably one of the constant and indispensable conditions of development of society and, of course, influences the development of society, accelerates or retards its development. But its influence is not the *determining* influence, inasmuch as the changes and development of society proceed at an incomparably faster rate than the changes and development of the geographical environment. In the space of three thousand years three different social systems have been successively superseded in Europe: the primitive communal system, the slave system and the feudal system. In the eastern part of Europe, in the USSR, even four social systems have been superseded. Yet during this period geographical conditions in Europe have either not changed at all, or have changed so slightly that geography takes no note of them. And that is quite natural. Changes in geographical environment of any importance require millions of years, whereas a few hundred or a couple of thousand years are enough for even very important changes in the system of human society.

It follows from this that geographical environment cannot be the chief cause, the *determining* cause of social development, for that which remains almost unchanged in the course of tens of thousands of years cannot be the chief cause of development of that which undergoes fundamental changes in the course of a few hundred years.

9*. Plekhanov develops these thoughts far more fully in additions not included in the second edition. (Cf. **The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll.IV, 1937, p.209.

10*. L. Morgan, **Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization**, New York 1878.

11*. Plekhanov’s posthumous article against Weisengrün, one of the early “critics” of Marx, is to be found in **The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll.V, 1937, pp.10-17.

12*. *The historical school of law (right)* was a reactionary trend in German jurisprudence at the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century defending feudalism and feudal monarchy against the conception of state law advanced by the French Revolution. Its chief representatives were Hugo, Savigny and Puchta.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Chapter V Modern Materialism (Part 2)

How did science emerge from that blind alley in which idealism found itself? Let us hear what Mr. M. Kovalevsky, one of the most distinguished representatives of modern comparative law, has to say.

Pointing out that the social life of primitive tribes bears on itself the stamp of communism, Mr. Kovalevsky (listen, Mr. V.V.: he also is a “professor”) says:

“If we enquire as to the real foundations for such an order of things, if we try and discover the reasons which forced our primitive forefathers, and still oblige modern savages, to maintain a more or less sharply expressed communism, we shall have in particular to learn the primitive modes of production. For the distribution and consumption of wealth must be determined by the methods of its creation. And as to this, ethnography states the following: hunting and fishing peoples secure their food as a rule in hordes ... In Australia the kangaroo is hunted by armed detachments of several tens, and even hundreds,, of natives. The same takes place in northern countries when hunting the reindeer ... It is beyond doubt that man is incapable of maintaining his existence alone; he needs help and support, and his forces are multiplied ten-fold by association ... Thus we see social production at the beginning of social development and, as the necessary natural consequence – of this, social consumption. Ethnography abounds in facts which prove this.” [29]

Having quoted the idealist theory of Lermina, according to which private property arises. from the self-consciousness of the individual, Mr. Kovalevsky continues:

“No, this is not so. It is not for this reason that primitive man arrives at the idea of the

personal appropriation of the chipped stone which serves him as a weapon, or of the skin which covers his body. He arrives at this idea in consequence of the application of his individual forces to the production of the object concerned. The flint which serves him as an axe has been chipped by his own hands. At the hunt in which he engaged together with many comrades, he struck the final blow at the animal, and therefore the skin of that animal becomes his personal property. The customary law of savages is distinguished by great exactness on this question. It carefully provides beforehand, for example, for the case in which the hunted animal fell under the joint blows of two hunters: in that event the animal's skin becomes the property of the hunter whose arrow penetrated nearest to the heart. It also provides for the case in which an already wounded animal was given the finishing blow by a hunter who turned up accidentally. The application of individual labour logically gives rise, consequently, to individual appropriation. We can trace this phenomenon through all history. He who planted a fruit tree becomes its owner ... Later a warrior who won a certain booty becomes its exclusive owner, so that his family no longer has any right to it. In just the same way a priest's family has no right to the sacrifices which are made by the faithful, and which become his personal property. All this is equally well confirmed by the Indian laws and by the customary law of the South Slavs, Don Cossacks or ancient Irish. And it is important not to make any mistake as to the true principle of such appropriation, which is the result of the application of personal effort. to the procuring of a definite object. For when the personal efforts of a man are supplemented. by the help of his kin ... the objects secured no longer become private property.” [30]

After all that has been said, it will be comprehensible why it is arms, clothes, food, adornments, etc., that first become objects of personal appropriation. “Already from the first steps taken, the domestication of animals – dogs, horses, cats, working cattle – constitutes the most important fund of personal and family appropriation ...” [31] But to what extent the organization of production continues to influence the modes of appropriation is shown, for example, by such a fact: among the Eskimos the hunting of whales takes place in big boats and big detachments, and the boats which serve for this purpose represent social property. But the little boats which serve for transporting the objects of family property themselves belong to separate families, or “at most to three kindred families.”

With the appearance of agriculture, the land also becomes an object of appropriation. The subjects of property in land become more or less large unions of kindred. This, naturally, is one of the forms of *social* appropriation. How is its origin to be explained? “It seems to us,” says Mr. Kovalevsky, “that its reasons lie in that same social production which once upon a time involved the appropriation of the greater part of movable objects.” [32]

Naturally, once it has arisen, *private* property enters into contradiction to the more ancient mode of *social* appropriation. Wherever the rapid development of productive forces opens a wider and wider field for “individual efforts,” social production fairly rapidly disappears, or continues to exist in the shape, so to speak, of a *rudimentary* institution. We shall see later on that this process of the disintegration of primitive social property at various times and in various places through the most natural, *material* necessity, was bound to be marked by great variety. At present we will only stress the general conclusion of the modern science of law that *legal*

conceptions – or convictions, as Puchta would have said – are everywhere *determined by the modes of production*.

Schelling said on one occasion that the phenomenon of magnetism must be understood as the embedding of the “subjective” in the “objective.” All attempts to discover an idealist explanation for the history of law represent no more than a supplement, a “*Seitenstück*,” to idealist natural philosophy. It amounts always to the same, sometimes brilliant and ingenious, but always arbitrary and always groundless meditations on the theme of the self-sufficing, *self-developing* spirit.

Legal conviction could not *precede* everyday practice for this one reason alone that, if it had not *grown out of that practice*, it would have *no reason* for existence whatsoever. The Eskimo stands for the personal appropriation of clothes, arms and implements of labour for the simple reason that such appropriation is much more convenient, and is suggested by *the very qualities of the things involved*. In order to learn the proper use of his weapon, his bow or his boomerang, the primitive hunter must *adapt himself to it*, study all its individual peculiarities, and if possible *adapt it* to his own individual peculiarities. [33] Private property here is in the nature of things, much more than any other form of appropriation, and therefore the savage is “convinced” of its advantages: as we know, he even attributes to the implements of individual labour and to arms some kind of mysterious connection with their owner. But his conviction grew up on the basis of everyday practice, and did not precede it: and it owes its origin, not to the qualities of his “spirit,” but to the qualities of the articles which he is using, and to the character of those modes of production which are inevitable for him in the existing state of his productive forces.

To what extent everyday practice precedes legal “conviction” is shown by the numerous symbolic acts existing in primitive law. The modes of production have changed, with them have likewise changed the mutual relations of men in the process of production, everyday practice has changed, yet “conviction” has retained its old shape. It contradicts the new practice, and so fictions appear, symbolic signs and actions, the sole purpose of which is formally to eliminate this contradiction. In the course of time the contradiction is at last eliminated in an essential way: on the basis of the new economic practice a new legal conviction takes shape.

It is not sufficient to register the appearance, in a given society, of private property in this or that object, to be able thereby to determine the character of that institution. Private property always has limits which depend entirely on the economy of society. “In the savage state man appropriates only the things which are directly useful to him. The surplus, even though it is acquired by the labour of his hands, he usually gives up gratuitously to others: to members of his family, or of his clan, or of his tribe,” says Mr. Kovalevsky. Rink says exactly the same about the Eskimos. But whence did such ways arise among the savage peoples? In the words of Mr. Kovalevsky, they owe their origin to the fact that savages are not acquainted with *saving*. [34] This is not a very clear expression, and is particularly unsatisfactory because it was very

much abused by the vulgar economists. Nevertheless, it can be understood in what sense our author uses the expression. “Saving” is really unknown to primitive peoples, for the simple reason that it is inconvenient and, one may say, impossible for them to practise it. The flesh of an animal that has been killed can be “saved” only to an inconsiderable extent: it goes bad, and then becomes quite unsuitable for use. Of course, if it could be sold, it would be very easy to “save” the money got for it. But money does not yet exist at this stage of economic development. Consequently, the economy of primitive society itself fixes narrow limits with – in which the spirit of “thrift” can develop. Moreover, today I was lucky enough to kill a big animal, and I shared its meat with others, but tomorrow (hunting is an uncertain business) I will return with empty hands, and others of my kin will share their booty with me. The custom of sharing thus appears as something in the nature of mutual insurance, without which the existence of hunting tribes would be quite impossible.

Finally, one must not forget that private property among such tribes exists only in an embryo form, while the prevailing property is social. The habits and customs which have grown up on this basis, in their turn, set limits to the arbitrary will of the owner of private property. Conviction, here too, follows economy.

The connection of the legal conceptions of men with their economic life is well illustrated by the example which Rodbertus readily and frequently used in his works. It is well known that the ancient Roman writers energetically protested against *usury*. Cato the Censor considered that a usurer was twice as bad as a thief (that was just what the old man said: exactly twice). In this respect the Fathers of the Christian Church were completely at one with the heathen writers. But – a remarkable fact – both revolted only against interest produced by *money* capital. But to loans in kind, and *to the surplus which they brought*, there was an incomparably milder attitude. Why this difference? Because it was precisely money or usurers’ capital that was effecting terrible devastations in society at that time: because it was precisely this that was “*ruining Italy*.” Legal “conviction,” here too, went hand-in-hand with economy.

“Law is the pure product of necessity or, more exactly, of need,” says Post. “In vain should we seek in it any ideal. basis whatsoever.” [35] We should say that this was quite in the spirit of the most modern science of law, if our scholar did not display a fairly considerable confusion of conceptions, very harmful in its consequences.

Speaking generally, *every* social union strives to work out such a, system of law as would best satisfy its needs and would be most useful for it at the given time. The circumstance that the particular sum-total of legal institutions is useful or harmful for society cannot in any way depend on the qualities of any “idea” whatsoever, from whomsoever the idea might come; *it depends*, as we have seen, *on the modes of production and on those mutual relations between people which are created by those modes*. In this sense law has not and cannot have any *ideal* foundations, as its foundations are always *real*. But the *real foundations* of every given system

of law do not exclude *an ideal attitude* towards that system on the part of the members of the given society. Taken as a whole, society only gains from such an attitude of its members towards that system. On the contrary, in its transitional epochs, when the system of law existing in society no longer satisfies its needs., which have grown in consequence of the further development of productive forces, the advanced part of the population can and must idealize *a new system of institutions*, more in keeping with the “spirit of the time.” French literature is full of examples of such an idealization of the new advancing order of things.

The origin of law in “*need*” excludes an “*ideal*” basis of law only in the conception of those people. who are accustomed to relegate need to the sphere of *crude matter*, and to contrast this sphere to the “pure spirit,” foreign to need of every kind. In reality, only that is “ideal” which is useful to men, and every society in working out its *ideals* is guided only by its needs. The seeming exceptions from this incontestably general rule are explained by the fact that, *in consequence of the development of society, its ideals* frequently lag behind its *new needs*. [36]

The realization of the dependence of social relations on the state of productive forces is penetrating more and more into modern social science, in spite of the inevitable eclecticism of many scientists and in spite of their idealist prejudices. “Just as comparative anatomy has raised to the level of a scientific truth the Latin proverb that ‘from the claws I recognize the lion,’ so the study of peoples can from the armament of a particular people form an exact conclusion as to the degree of its civilization,” says Oscar Peschel, whom we have already quoted. [37]

“With the mode of procuring food is bound up most intimately the dissection of society. Wherever man joins with man a certain authority appears. Weakest of all are the social ties among the wandering hunter hordes of Brazil. But they have to defend their areas and need at least a military chief. The pastoral tribes are for the most part under the authority of patriarchal sovereigns, as the herds belong as a rule to a single master, who is served by his fellow-tribesmen or by previously independent but later impoverished possessors of herds. The pastoral form of life is mostly, though not exclusively, characterized by great migrations of peoples, both in the north of the Old World and in South Africa; on the other hand, the history of America knows only of individual attacks by wild hunter tribes on the fields of civilized peoples which attract them. Entire peoples which leave their previous places of habitation could make great and prolonged journeys only when accompanied by their herds, which provided them with the necessary food on their way. Furthermore, prairie cattle-breeding itself impels a change of pastures. But with the settled mode of life and agriculture there immediately appears the striving to make use of the labour of slaves ... Slavery leads sooner or later to tyranny, since he who has the largest number of slaves can with their help subject the weakest to his will ... The division into free men and slaves is the beginning of the division of society into estates.” [38]

Peschel has many considerations of this kind. Some of them are quite just and very instructive; others are “debatable” for more than Mr. Mikhailovsky. But what we are concerned with here are not particular details but the general direction of Peschel’s thought. And that general direction completely coincides with what we have already seen in the work of Mr. Kovalevsky: *it is in the modes of production, in the state of the productive forces, that he seeks the*

explanation of the history of law and even of the whole organization of society.

And this is precisely what Marx long ago and insistently advised writers on social science to do. And in this lies to a considerable extent, though not completely (the reader will see later why we say: not completely), the sense of that remarkable preface to **A Critique of Political Economy** which had such bad luck here in Russia, which was so terribly and so strangely misunderstood by the majority of Russian writers who read it in the original or in extracts.

“In the social production of their life, men enter in-to definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, *relations of production which* correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum-total of these relations of production constitutes the *economic structure* of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure ...” [13*]

Hegel says of Schelling that the fundamental principles of the system of that philosopher remain undeveloped, and his absolute spirit appears unexpectedly, *like a pistol-shot (wie aus der Pistole geschossen)*. When the average Russian intellectual hears that in Marx “everything is reduced to the economic foundation” (others say simply: “to the economic”), he loses his head, as though someone had suddenly fired a pistol by his ear. “But why to the economic?” he asks dejectedly and uncomprehendingly. “Of course the economic is also important (especially for the poor peasants and workmen). But after all, no less important is the intellectual (particularly for us intellectuals).” What has just been set forth has, we hope, shown the reader that the perplexity of the average Russian intellectual occurs in this case only because he, that intellectual, was always a little careless about what was “*particularly important intellectually*” for himself. When Marx said that “*the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy,*” he did not at all intend to upset the world of learning by sudden pistol-shots: he was only giving a direct and exact reply to the “damned questions” which had tormented thinking heads *for a whole century*.

The French materialists, consistently developing their sensationalist views, came to the conclusion that man, with all his thoughts, feelings and aspirations, is the product of his social environment. In order to go further in applying the materialist view to the study of man, it was necessary to solve the problem of what conditions the structure of the social environment, and what are the laws of its development. The French materialists were unable to reply to this question, and thereby were forced to be false to themselves and return to the old *idealist* point of view which they had so strongly condemned: they said that environment is created by the “*opinion*” of men. Dissatisfied with this superficial reply, the French historians of the Restoration set themselves the task of analyzing social environment. The result of their analysis was the conclusion, extremely important for science, that *political constitutions* are rooted in *social relations*, while social relations are determined by the *state of property*. With this conclusion there arose before science a new problem, without solving which it could not proceed: *what then determines the state of property?* The solution of this problem proved to be beyond the powers of the French historians of the Restoration, and they were obliged to dismiss

it with remarks on the qualities of human nature which explained absolutely nothing at all. The great idealists of Germany – Schelling and Hegel – who were their contemporaries in life and work, already well understood how unsatisfactory was the point of view of human nature: Hegel made caustic fun of it. They understood that the key to the explanation of the historical advance of humanity must be sought *outside* human nature, This was a great service which they rendered: but in order that that service should prove completely fruitful for science, it was necessary to show *where precisely that key should be sought*. They looked for it in the *qualities of the spirit*, in the *logical laws of development of the absolute idea*. This was a radical error of the great idealists, which returned them by roundabout ways to the *point of view of human nature*, since the absolute idea, as we have already seen, is nothing else than the personification of our logical process of thought. The discovery of the genius of Marx corrects this radical error of idealism, thereby inflicting on it a deadly blow: the state of property, and with it all the qualities of the social environment (we saw in the chapter of idealist philosophy that Hegel, too, was forced to recognize the decisive importance of the “state of property”) are determined, not by the qualities of the absolute spirit and not by the character of human nature, but by those mutual relations into which men of necessity enter one with another “in the social production of their life,” i.e., in their struggle for existence. Marx has often been compared with Darwin – a comparison which arouses Messrs. Mikhailovsky, Kareyev and their fraternity to laughter. Later we shall say in what sense that comparison should be understood, although probably many readers already see it without our help. Here we shall permit ourselves, with all due respect to our subjective thinkers, another comparison.

Before Copernicus, astronomy taught that the earth is a motionless centre, around which revolve the sun and the other celestial bodies. This view made it impossible to explain very many phenomena of celestial mechanics. The Polish genius approached their explanation from quite the opposite point of view: he presupposed that it was not the sun that revolves around the earth, but on the contrary the earth around the sun. The correct view-point had been discovered, and much became clear that had been unclear before Copernicus.

Before Marx, writers on social science had taken human nature as their point of departure, and thanks to this, the most important questions of human development had remained unanswered. Marx’s teaching gave affairs quite a different turn: *while man, to maintain his existence, acts on the external world, he changes his own nature* [14*], said Marx. Consequently the scientific explanation of historical development should be begun at the opposite end: it is necessary to ascertain in what way does this process of the productive action of man on external nature take place. In its great importance for science, this discovery can be boldly placed on a par with the discovery of Copernicus, and on a par with the greatest and most fruitful discoveries of science in general.

Strictly speaking, previous to Marx, social science had much less in the way of a firm foundation than astronomy before Copernicus. The French used to call, and still call, all the

sciences bearing on human society, “*sciences morales et politiques*” as distinct from “science” in the strict sense of the word, under which name were understood, and are still understood, only the exact sciences. And it must be admitted that, before Marx, social science was not and could not be exact. So long as learned men appealed to human nature as to the highest authority, of necessity they had to explain the social relations of men by their views, their *conscious activity*; but the conscious activity of man necessarily has to present itself to him as *free* activity. But free activity excludes the *conception of necessity*, i.e., of conformity to law: and conformity to law is the necessary foundation of any scientific explanation of phenomena. *The idea of freedom obscured the conception of necessity, and thereby hindered the development of science.* This aberration can up to the present day be observed with amazing clarity in the “sociological” works of “subjective” Russian writers.

But we already know that *freedom must be necessary*. By obscuring the conception of necessity, the idea of freedom itself became extremely dim and a very poor comfort. Driven out at the door, necessity flew in at the window; starting from their idea of freedom, investigators every moment came up against necessity, and in the long run arrived at the melancholy recognition of its fatal, irresistible and utterly invincible action. To their horror, freedom proved to be an eternally helpless and hopeless tributary, an impotent plaything in the hands of blind necessity. And truly pathetic was the despair which at times seized upon the clearest and most generous idealistic minds.

“For several days now I have been taking up my pen every minute,” says Georg Büchner, “but cannot write a word. I have been studying the history of the revolution. I have felt myself crushed, as it were, by the frightful fatalism of history. I see in human nature the most repulsive dullness, but in human relations an invincible force, which belongs to all in general and to no one in particular. The individual personality is only foam on the crest of the wave, greatness is only an accident, the power of genius is only a puppet-show, a ridiculous attempt to fight against iron law, which at best can only be discovered, but which it is impossible to subject to one’s will.” [39]

It may be said that, to avoid such bursts of what naturally was quite legitimate despair, it was worth while even for a time abandoning one’s old point of view, and attempting to *liberate freedom*, by appealing to that same *necessity* which made a mock of her. It was necessary once again to review the question which had already been put by the *dialectical* idealists, as to whether freedom does not follow from necessity, and whether the latter does not constitute the only firm foundation, the only stable guarantee and inevitable condition of human freedom.

We shall see to what such an attempt led Marx. But as a preliminary let us try and clear up for ourselves his historical views, so that no misunderstandings should remain in our minds on that subject.

On the basis of a particular state of the productive forces there come into existence certain relations of production, which receive their ideal expression in the legal notions of men and in

more or less “abstract rules,” in unwritten customs and written laws. We no longer require to demonstrate this: as we have seen, the present-day science of law demonstrates it for us (let the reader remember what Mr. Kovalevsky says on this subject). But it will do no harm if we examine the question from the following different point of view. Once we have ascertained in what way the legal *notions* of men are created by their *relations in production*, we shall not be surprised by the following words of Marx: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being” (i.e., the form of their social existence – *G.P.*), “but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.” [15*] Now we know already that at least in relation to one sphere of consciousness this is really so, and why it is so. We have only to decide whether it is al-ways so, and, if the answer is in the affirmative, why it is always .so? Let us keep for the time being to the same legal notions.

“At a certain stage of their development, the *material productive forces* of society come in conflict with the existing *relations of production*, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of *development* of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.” [16*]

Social ownership of movable and immovable property arises because it is convenient and moreover necessary for the process of primitive production. It maintains the existence of primitive society, it facilitates the further development of its productive forces, and men cling to it, they consider it natural and necessary. But now, *thanks to those property relations and within them*, the productive forces have developed to such an extent that a wider field has opened for the application of individual efforts. Now social property becomes in some cases *harmful* for society, it impedes the further development of its productive forces, and therefore it yields place to *personal appropriation*: a more or less rapid revolution takes place in the legal institutions of society. This revolution necessarily is accompanied by a revolution in the legal conceptions of men: people who thought previously that only social property was good, now began to think that in some cases individual appropriation was better. But no, we are expressing it inaccurately, we are representing as two separate processes what is completely inseparable, what represents only two sides of one and the same process: *in consequence of the development of the productive forces, the actual relations of men in the process of production were bound to change, and these new de facto relations expressed themselves in new legal notions.*

Mr. Kareyev assures us that materialism is just as one-sided in its application to history as idealism. Each represents, in his opinion, only a “moment” in the development of complete scientific truth. “After the first and second moments must come a third moment: the one-sidedness of the thesis and that of the antithesis will find their application in the synthesis, as the expression of the complete truth.” [40] It will be a most interesting synthesis. “In what that synthesis will consist, I shall not for the time being say,” the Professor adds. A pity! Fortunately, our “historiosophist” does not very strictly observe this vow of silence which he has imposed upon himself. He immediately gives us to understand in what will consist and whence

will arise that complete scientific truth which will, in time, be understood by all enlightened humanity, but for the time being is known only to Mr. Kareyev. It will grow out of the following considerations:

“Every human personality, consisting of body and soul, leads a two-fold life – physical and psychical – appearing before us neither exclusively as flesh with its material requirements, nor exclusively as spirit with its intellectual and moral requirements. Both the body and the soul of man have their requirements, which seek satisfaction and which place the individual personality in different relationships to the external world, i.e., to nature and to other men, i.e., to society, and these relationships are of a two-fold character.” [41]

That man consists of soul and body is a just “synthesis,” though hardly what one would call a very new discovery. If Mr. Professor is acquainted with the history of modern philosophy, he must know that it has been breaking its teeth on this same synthesis for whole centuries, and has not been able to cope with it properly. And if he imagines that this “synthesis” will reveal to him “the essence of the historical process,” Mr. V.V. himself will have to agree that something is going wrong with his “professor,” and that it is not Mr. Kareyev who is destined to become the Spinoza of “historiosophy.”

With the development of the productive forces, which lead to changes in the mutual relationships of men in the social process of production, there change all property relations. But it was already Guizot who told us that political constitutions are rooted in property relations. This is fully confirmed by modern knowledge. The union of kindred yields place to the territorial union precisely on account of the changes which arise in property relations. More or less important territorial unions amalgamate in organisms called states, again in consequence of changes which have taken place in property relations, or in consequence of new requirements of the social process of production. This has been excellently demonstrated, for example, in relation to the large states of the East. [42] Equally well this has been explained in relation to the states of the ancient world. [43] And, speaking generally, it is not difficult to demonstrate the truth of this for *any* particular state on whose origin we have sufficient in-formation. In doing so we only need not to narrow, consciously or unconsciously, Marx’s view. What we mean is this.

The particular state of productive forces conditions the *internal* relations of the given society. But the same state of the productive forces also conditions *its external relations* with other societies. On the basis of these external relations, society forms *new requirements*, to satisfy which *new organs* arise. At a superficial glance, the mutual relations of individual societies present themselves as a series of “political” acts, having no direct bearing on economics. In reality, what underlies relations between societies is precisely *economics*, which determines both the real (not only external) causes of inter-tribal and international relations, and their results. To each stage in the development of the productive forces corresponds its own particular system of armament, its military tactics, its diplomacy, its international law. Of course many cases may be pointed out in which international conflicts have no direct relationship with economics. And

none of the followers of Marx will dream of disputing the existence of such cases. All they say is: don't stop at the surface of phenomena, go down deeper, ask yourself on what basis did this international law grow up? What created the possibility of international conflicts of this kind? And what you will arrive at in the long run is economics. True, the examination of individual cases is made more difficult by the fact that not infrequently the conflicting societies are going through *dissimilar phases of economic development*.

But at this point we are interrupted by a chorus of acute opponents. "Very well," they cry. "Let us admit that political relations are rooted in economic relations. But once political relations have been given, then, wherever they came from, they, in turn, influence economics. Consequently, there is interaction here, and nothing but interaction."

This objection has not been invented by us. The high value placed upon it by opponents of "economic materialism" is shown by the following fact.

Marx in his **Capital** cites facts which show that the English aristocracy used the political power to achieve its own ends in the sphere of landownership. Dr. Paul Barth, who wrote a critical essay entitled **Die Geschichtsphilosophie Hegel's and der Hegelianer**, has seized on this to reproach Marx with contradicting himself [18*]: you yourself, he says, admit that there is interaction here: and to prove that interaction really exists, our doctor refers to the book of Sternegg, a writer who has done much for the study of the economic history of Germany. Mr. Kareyev thinks that "the pages devoted in Barth's book to the criticism of economic materialism may be recommended as a model of how the problem of the role of the economic factor in history should be solved." Naturally, he has not failed to point out to his readers the objections raised by Barth and the authoritative statement of Inama-Sternegg, "who even formulates the general proposition that interaction between politics and economy is the fundamental characteristic of the development of all states and peoples." We must bring at least a little light into this muddle.

First of all, what does Inama-Sternegg actually say? On the subject of the Carolingian period in the economic history of Germany he makes the following remark:

"The interaction between politics and economics which constitutes the main feature of development of all *states* and all peoples can be traced here in the most exact fashion. As always the political role which falls to the lot of a given people exercises a decisive influence on the further development of its forces, on the structure and elaboration of its social institutions; on the other hand, the internal strength innate in a people and the natural laws of its development determine the measure and the nature of its political activity. In precisely this way the political system of the Carolings no less influenced the changing of the social order and the development of the economic relations in which the people lived at that time than the elemental forces of the people – its economic life – influenced the direction of that political system, leaving on the latter its own peculiar imprint." [44]

And that's all. It's not very much; but this is thought sufficient to refute Marx.

Now let us recall, in the second place, what Marx says about the relations between economies on the one hand, and law and politics on the other.

“Legal and political institutions are formed on the basis of the actual relations of men in the social process of production. For a time these institutions *facilitate* the further development of the productive forces of a people, the prosperity of its economic life.” These are the exact words of Marx; and we ask the first conscientious man we meet, do these words contain any denial of the importance of political relations in economic development, and is Marx refuted by those who remind him of that importance? Is it not true that there is not a trace of any such denial in Marx, and the people just mentioned are refuting nothing at all? To such an extent is it true that one has to consider the question, not of whether Marx has been refuted, but of why he was so badly understood? And to this question we can reply only with the French proverb: *la plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a* (the most beautiful girl in the world can only give what she has got – *Ed.*). The critics of Marx cannot surpass that measure of understanding with which a bountiful Nature has endowed them. [45]

Interaction between politics and economics exists: that is just as unquestionable as the fact that Mr. Kareyev does not understand Marx. But does the existence of interaction prohibit us from going further in our analysis of the life of society? No, to think that would mean almost the same as to imagine that the lack of understanding displayed by Mr. Kareyev can prevent us from attaining correct “historiosophical” conceptions.

Political institutions influence economic life. They *either facilitate* its development *or impede* it. The first case is in no way surprising from the point of view of Marx, because the given political system has been created for the very purpose of *promoting the further development of the productive forces* (whether it is consciously or unconsciously created is in this case all one to us). The second case does not in any way contradict Marx's point of view, because historical experience shows that once a given political system ceases to correspond to the state of the productive forces, once it is transformed into an obstacle to their further development, it begins to decline and finally is eliminated. Far from contradicting the teachings of Marx, this case confirms them in the best possible way, because it is this case that shows in what sense economics dominates politics, in what way the development of productive forces outdistances the political development of a people.

Economic evolution brings in its wake legal revolutions. It is not easy for a *metaphysician* to understand this because, although he does shout about interaction, he is accustomed to examine phenomena one after another, and one independently of another. But it will be understood without difficulty by anyone who is in the least capable of *dialectical* thinking. He knows that *quantitative changes*, accumulating gradually, *lead* in the end to *changes of quality*, and that

these changes of qualities represent *leaps, interruptions in gradualness*.

At this point our opponents can stand it no longer, and pronounce their “*slovo i delo*” [19*]; why, that’s how *Hegel* used to talk, they shout. That’s *how all Nature acts*, we reply.

A tale is soon told, but work goes more slowly. In its application to history, this proverb may be altered in this way: a tale is told very simply, but work is complex in the extreme. Yes, it’s easy to say that the development of productive forces brings in its train revolutions in legal institutions? These revolutions represent complex processes, in the course of which the interests of individual members of society group themselves in the most whimsical fashion. For some it is profitable to support the old order, and they defend it with every resource at their command. For others the old order has become already harmful and hateful, and they attack it with all the strength at their disposal. And this is not all. The interests of the innovators are also far from similar in all cases: for some one set of reforms are more important, for others another set. Disputes arise in the camp of the reformers itself, and the struggle becomes more complicated. And although, as Mr. Kareyev so justly re-marks, man consists of soul and body, the struggle for the most indisputably material interests necessarily rises before the disputing sides the most undoubtedly spiritual problem of *justice*. To what extent does old order contradict justice? To what extent are the new demands in keeping with justice? These questions inevitably arise in the minds of those who are contesting, although they will not always call it simply justice, but may personify it in the shape of some goddess in human, or even in animal shape. Thus, notwithstanding the injunction pronounced by Mr. Kareyev, the “body” gives birth to the “soul”: the *economic* struggle arouses *moral* questions – and the “soul” at closer examination proves to be the “body.” *The “justice” of the old believers* not infrequently turns out to be *the interests of the exploiters*.

Those very same people who, with such astounding inventiveness, attribute to Marx the denial of the significance of politics assert that he attached no significance whatsoever to the moral, philosophical, religious or aesthetic conceptions of men, everywhere and anywhere seeing only “the economic.” This once again is unnatural chatter, as Shchedrin put it. Marx did not deny the “*significance*” of all these conceptions, but only ascertained whence they came.

“What is electricity? A particular form of motion. What is heat? A particular form of motion. What is light? A particular form of motion. Oh, so that’s it! So you don’t attach any meaning either to light, or to heat, or to electricity! It’s all one motion for you; what one-sidedness, what narrowness of conception!” Just so, gentlemen, narrowness is the word. You have understood perfectly the meaning of the doctrine of the transformation of energy.

Every given stage of development of the productive forces necessarily involves *definite grouping of men* in the social process of production, i.e., *definite relations of production*, i.e., *a definite structure of the whole of society*. But once the structure of society has been given, it is

not difficult to understand that the character of that structure will be reflected generally in the entire *psychology* of men, in all their habits, manners, feelings, views, aspirations and ideals. Habits, manners, views, aspirations and ideals will necessarily have to adapt themselves to men's way of life, to their *mode of procuring their subsistence* (to use Peschel's expression). *The psychology of society is always expedient in relation to its economy, always corresponds to it, is always determined by it.* The same phenomenon is repeated here which the Greek philosophers themselves noticed. in nature: expediency triumphs, for the reason that that which is inexpedient is by its very character doomed to perish. Is it advantageous for society, in its struggle for existence, that there should be this adaptation of its psychology to its economy, to the conditions of life? Very advantageous, because habits and views which did not correspond to its economy and which contradicted the conditions of existence would interfere with the maintenance of that existence. An expedient psychology is just as useful for society as organs which are well fitted for their task are useful for the organism. But to say that the organs of animals must be appropriate to the conditions of their existence – does that mean the same as saying that the organs have no significance for the animal? Quite the contrary. It means recognizing their colossal and *essential significance*. Only very weak heads could understand matters otherwise. Now the same, the very same, gentlemen, is the case with psychology. Recognizing that it adapts itself to the economy of society, Marx thereby was recognizing its vast and irreplaceable significance.

The difference between Marx and, for example, Mr. Kareyev reduces itself in this case to the fact that the latter, in spite of his inclination to “synthesis,” remains a dualist of the purest water. In his view, economics are here and psychology is there: the soul is in one, pocket and the body in another. Between these two substances there is interaction, but each of them maintains its in-dependent existence, the origin of which is wrapped in the darkest mystery. [46] The point of view of Marx eliminates this dualism. With him *the economy of society* and its *psychology* represent two sides of one and the same phenomenon of the “production of life” of men, their struggle for existence, in which they are grouped in a particular way thanks to the particular state of the productive forces. The struggle for existence creates their *economy*, and on the same basis arises their *psychology* as well. Economy itself is something derivative, just like psychology. And that is the very reason why the economy of every progressing society *changes*: the new state of productive forces brings with it a new economic structure just as it does a new psychology, a new “spirit of the age.” From this it can be seen that only in a popular speech could one talk about economy as the *prime cause* of all social phenomena. Far from being a prime cause, it is itself a consequence, a “function” of the productive forces.

And now follow the points promised in the footnote.

“Both the body and the soul of man have their requirements, which seek satisfaction and which place the individual personality in different relationships to the external world, i.e., to nature and to other men ... The relation of man to nature, according to the physical and

spiritual needs of the personality, therefore creates, on the one hand, various kinds of arts aiming at ensuring the material existence of the personality and, on the other hand, all intellectual and moral culture ...” [20*]

The materialist attitude of man to nature rests upon the requirements of the body, the qualities of matter. It is in the requirements of the body that one must discover “the causes of hunting, cattle-breeding, agriculture, manufacturing industry, trade and monetary operations.” From a common-sense point of view this is so, of course: for if we have no body, why should we need cattle and beasts, land and machines, trade and gold? But on the other hand, we must also say: what is body without soul? No more than matter, and matter after all is dead. Matter of itself can create nothing if in its turn it does not consist of soul and body. Consequently matter traps wild beasts, domesticates cattle, works the land, trades and presides over the banks not of its own intelligence, but by direction of the soul. Consequently it is in the soul that one must seek the ultimate cause for the origin of the materialist attitude of man to nature. Consequently the soul also has dual requirements; consequently it also consists of soul and body – and that somehow sounds not quite right. Nor is that all. Willy-nilly “opinion” arises about the following subject as well. According to Mr. Kareyev it appears that the materialist relation of man to nature arises on the basis of his bodily requirements. But is that exact? Is it only to nature that such relations arise? Mr. Kareyev, perhaps, remembers how the abbé Guibert condemned the municipal communes who were striving for their liberation from the feudal yoke as “base” institutions, the sole purpose of existence of which was, he said, to avoid the proper fulfilment of feudal obligations. What was then speaking in the abbé Guibert – “body” or “soul”? If it was the “body” then, we say again, that body also consisted of “body” and “soul”; and if it was the “soul” then it consisted of “soul” and “body,” for it displayed in this case under examination very little of that unselfish attitude to phenomena which, in the words of Mr. Kareyev, represents the distinctive feature of the “soul.” Try and make head or tail of that! Mr. Kareyev will say, perhaps, that in the abbé Guibert it was the soul that was speaking, to be exact, but that it was speaking under dictation from the body, and that the same takes place when man is occupied with hunting, with banks, etc. But first of all, in order: to dictate, the body again must consist both of body and of soul. And secondly, a crude materialist may remark: well, there’s the soul talking under the dictation of the body, consequently the fact that man consists of soul and body does not in itself mean anything at all. Perhaps throughout history all the soul has been doing is to talk under dictation from the body? Mr. Kareyev, of course, will be indignant at such a supposition, and will begin refuting the “crude materialist.” We are firmly convinced that victory will remain on the side of the worthy professor; but will he be greatly helped in the fray by that unquestionable circumstance that man consists of soul and body?

And even this is not all. We have read in Mr. Kareyev’s writings that on the basis of the spiritual requirements of personality there grow up “mythology and religion ... literature and arts” and in general “the theoretical attitude to the external world” (and to one-self also), “to questions of being and cognition,” and likewise “the unselfish creative reproduction of external

phenomena” (and of one’s own intentions). We believed Mr. Kareyev. But ... we have an acquaintance, a technological student, who is passionately devoted to the study of the technique of manufacturing industry, but has displayed no “theoretical” attitude to all that has been listed by the professor. And so we find ourselves asking, can our friend be composed only of a body? We beg Mr. Kareyev to resolve as quickly as he can this doubt, so tormenting for ourselves and so humiliating for a young, extremely gifted technologist, who maybe is even a genius!

If Mr. Kareyev’s argument has any sense, it is only the following: man has requirements of a higher and lower order, he has egotistical strivings and . altruistic feelings. This is the most incontestable truth, but quite incapable of becoming the foundation of “historiosophy.” You will never get any further with it than hollow and long-since hackneyed reflections on the theme of human nature: it is no more than such a reflection itself.

While we have been chatting with Mr. Kareyev, our perspicacious critics have had time to catch us contradicting ourselves, and above all Marx. We have said that economy is not the prime cause of all social phenomena, yet at the same time we assert that the psychology of society adapts itself to its economy: the first contradiction. We say that the economy and the psychology of society represent two sides of one and the same phenomenon, whereas Marx himself says that economy. is the real foundation on which arise the ideological superstructures: a second contradiction, all the more lamentable for us because in it we are diverging from the views of the man whom we undertook to expound. Let us explain.

That the principal cause of the social historical process is the development of the productive forces, we say word for word with Marx: so that here there is no contradiction. Consequently, if it does exist anywhere, it can only be in the question of the relationship between the economy of society and its psychology. Let us see whether it exists.

The reader will be good enough to remember how private property arises. The development of the productive forces places men in such relations of production that the personal appropriation of certain objects proves to be more convenient for the process of production. In keeping with this the legal conceptions of primitive man change. The *psychology* of society adapts itself to its *economy*. On the given *economic foundation* there rises up fatally the *ideological superstructure* appropriate to it. But on the other hand each new step in the development of the productive forces places men, in their daily life, in new mutual relations which do not correspond to the relations of production now becoming outdated. These new and unprecedented situations reflect themselves in the psychology of men, and very strongly change it. In what direction? Some members of society defend the old order: these are the people of stagnation. Others – to whom the old order is not advantageous – stand for progress; their psychology changes in the direction of *those relations of production which in time will replace the old economic relations, now becoming outdated*. The adaptation of psychology to economy, as you see, continues, but slow psychological evolution *precedes* economic revolution. [47]

Once this revolution has taken place, a complete harmony is established between the psychology of society and its economy. Then on the basis of the new economy there takes place the full flowering of the new psychology. For a certain time this harmony remains unbroken, and even becomes stronger and stronger. But little by little the first shoots of a new discord make their appearance; the psychology of the foremost class, for the reason mentioned above, again outlives old relations of production: without for a moment ceasing to adapt itself to economy, it again adapts itself to the *new* relations of production, constituting the germ of the future economy. Well, are not these two sides of one and the same process?

Up to now we have been illustrating the idea of Marx mainly by examples from the sphere of the law of property. This law is undoubtedly the same ideology we have been concerned with, but ideology of the first or, so to speak, lower sort. How are we to understand the view of Marx regarding ideology of the higher sort – science, philosophy, the arts, etc.?

In the development of these ideologies, economy is the foundation in this sense, that society must achieve a certain degree of prosperity in order to produce out of itself a certain stratum of people who could devote their energies exclusively to scientific and other similar occupations. Furthermore, the views of *Plato* and *Plutarch* which we quoted earlier show that the very *direction* of intellectual work in society is determined by the *production relations of the latter*. It was already *Vice* who said of the sciences that they grow out of social needs. In respect of such a science as political economy, this is clear for everyone who has the least knowledge of its history. Count Pecchio justly remarked that political economy particularly confirms the rule that practice always and everywhere precedes science. [48] Of course, this too can be interpreted in a very abstract sense; one may say: “Well, naturally science needs experience, and the more the experience the fuller the science.” But this is not the point here. Compare the economic views of Aristotle or Xenophon with the views of Adam Smith or Ricardo, and you will see that between the economic science of ancient Greece, on the *one* hand, and the economic science of bourgeois society, on the other, there exists not only a *quantitative* but also a *qualitative* difference – the point of view is quite different, the attitude to the subject is quite different. How is this difference to be explained? Simply by the fact that *the very phenomena have changed*: relations of production in bourgeois society don’t resemble production relations in ancient society. Different relations in production create different views in science. Furthermore; compare the views of Ricardo with the views of some Bastiat, and you will see that these men have different views of production relations which were the same in their *general character*, being *bourgeois* production relations. Why is this? Because at the time of Ricardo these relations were still only flowering and becoming stronger, while in the time of Bastiat they had already begun to decline. Different conditions of the *same* production relations necessarily had to reflect themselves in the views of the persons who were defending them.

Or let us take the science of public law. How and why did its theory develop? “The scientific elaboration of public law,” says Professor Gumplowicz, “begins only where the dominating

classes come into conflict among themselves regarding the sphere of authority belonging to each of them. Thus, the first big political struggle which we encounter in the second half of the European middle ages, the struggle between the secular and the ecclesiastic authority, the struggle between the Emperor and the Pope, gives the first impetus to the development of the German science of public law. The second disputed political question which brought division into the midst of the dominating classes, and gave an impulse to the elaboration by publicists of the appropriate, part of public law was the question of the election of the

Emperor," [\[49\]](#) and so on.

What are the mutual relations of classes? They are, in the first place, just those relations which people adopt to one another in the social process of production – *production relations*. These relations find their expression in the political organization of society and in the political struggle of various classes, and that struggle serves as an impetus for the appearance and development of various *political theories*: on the economic foundation there necessarily arises its appropriate ideological superstructure.

Still, all these ideologies, too, may be of the first quality, but are certainly not of the highest order. How do matters.. stand, for example, with philosophy or art? Before replying to this question, we. must make a certain digression.

Helvetius started from the principle that *l'homme n'est que sensibilité*. From this point of view it is obvious that man. will avoid unpleasant sensations and will strive to acquire only those which are pleasant. This is the inevitable, natural egotism of sentient matter. But if this is so, in what way do there arise in man quite unselfish strivings, like love of truth or heroism? Such was the problem which Helvetius had to solve. He did not prove capable of solving it, and in order to get out of his difficulty he simply crossed out that same *x*, that same unknown quantity, which he had undertaken to define. He began to say that there is not a single learned man who loves truth unselfishly, that every man sees in it only the path to glory, and in glory the path to money, and in money the. means of procuring for himself pleasant physical sensations, as for example, by purchasing savoury food or beautiful slaves. One need hardly say how futile are such explanations. They only demonstrated what we noted earlier – the incapacity of French *metaphysical* materialism to grapple with *questions of development*.

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Footnotes

29. M. Kovalevsky, **Tableau des origines et de l'évolution de la famille et de la propriété**, Stockholm 1890, pp.52-53. The late N. Sieber's **Outlines of Primitive Economic Culture** contains numerous facts demonstrating with the utmost clarity that modes of appropriation are determined by modes of production.

30. **Ibid.**, p.95.

31. **Ibid.**, p.57.

32. **Ibid.**, p.93.

33. It is known that the intimate connection between the hunter and his weapon exists in all primitive tribes. – “Der Jäger darf sich keiner fremden Waffen bedienen,” (“The hunter must not make use of a stranger’s weapons.” – *Ed.*) says Martius of the primitive inhabitants of Brazil, explaining at the same time whence these savages derived such a “conviction”: “Besonders behaupten diejenigen Wilden, die mit dem Blasrohr schießen, dass dieses Geschoss durch den Gebrauch eines Fremden verdorben werde, und geben es nicht aus ihren Händen”. (“In particular these savages who shoot with a blowpipe insist that this weapon is spoiled when used by a stranger, and don’t allow it out of their hands.”) (**Von dem Rechtszustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens**, Munich 1832, p.50.) “Die Führung dieser Waffen (bows and arrows) erfordert eine grosse Geschicklichkeit und beständige Uebung. Wo sie bei wilden Völkern im Gebrauche sind, berichten uns die Reisenden, dass schon die Knaben sich mit Kindergeräten im Schiessen üben.” (“The use of these weapons (bows and arrows) requires great skill and constant practice. Where they are in use among savage peoples, we are told by travellers, the boys already practise shooting with toy weapons.”) (Oskar Peschel, **Völkerkunde**, Leipzig 1875, S. 190.)

34. **Loc. cit.**, p.56.

35. Dr. Albert Hermann Post, **Der Ursprung des Rechts. Prolegomena zu einer allgemeinen vergleichenden Rechtswissenschaft**, Oldenburg 1876, p.25.

36. Post belongs to the category of these people who have far from parted with idealism yet. Thus, for example, he shows that the union of kindred corresponds to hunting and nomad society, and that with the appearance of agriculture and the stable settlement bound up with it, the union of kindred yields place to “*Gaugenossenschaft*” (we should call it the neighbour-community), it would seem clear that the man is seeking the key to the explanation of the history of social relations in nothing else than the development of productive forces. In individual cases Post is almost always true to such a principle. But this does not prevent him regarding “*im Menschen schaffend ewigen Geist*” (“the Eternal Spirit, creating in Man” – *Ed.*) as the fundamental cause of the history of law. This than has been, as it were, specially created in order to delight Mr. Kareyev.

37. **Loc. cit.**, p.139. When we were making this extract, we imagined Mr. Mikhailovsky quickly rising in his seat, crying: “I find this debatable: the Chinese may be armed with English rifles. Can one on the basis of these rifles judge of the degree of their civilization?” Very well asked, Mr. Mikhailovsky: from English rifles it is not logical to draw conclusions about Chinese civilization. It is of English civilization that one must judge from, them.

[38.](#) **Loc. cit.**, pp. 252-53.

[39.](#) In a letter to his betrothed, written in 1833. *Footnote for Mr. Mikhailovsky*: This is not the Büchner who preached materialism in the “general philosophical sense”: it is his brother, who died young, the author of a famous tragedy, *The Death of Danton*.

[40.](#) **Vestnik Yevropy**, July 1894, p.6.

[41.](#) **Ibid.**, p.7.

[42.](#) See the book of the late L. Mechnikov on the **Great Historical Rivers**. [\[17*\]](#) In this book the author in essence only summarized the conclusions arrived at by the most authoritative specialist historians, such as Lenormant. Élisée Reclus says in his introduction to the book that Mechnikov’s view will mark an epoch in the history of science. This is untrue, in the sense that the view is not a new one: Hegel expressed it in the most definite way. But undoubtedly science will gain a great deal if it consistently adheres to that view.

[43.](#) See Morgan’s **Ancient Society** and Engels’s book, **Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**.

[44.](#) **Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte bis zum Schluss der Karolingenperiode**, Leipzig 1889, Vol.I, pp.233-34.

[45.](#) Marx says that “*every class struggle is a political struggle.*” *Consequently, concludes Barth, politics in your opinion does not influence economics at all, yet you yourself quote facts proving ... etc.* Bravo, exclaims Mr. Kareyev, that’s what I call a model of how one ought to argue with Marx! The “model” of Mr. Kareyev displays a remarkable power of thought altogether. “Rousseau,” says the model, “lived in a society where class distinctions and privileges were carried to the extreme, where all were subjected to an all-powerful despotism; and yet the method of the rational structure of the state borrowed from antiquity – the method which was also used by Hobbes and Locke – led Rousseau to create an ideal of society based on universal equality and popular self-government. This ideal completely contradicted the order existing in France. Rousseau’s theory was carried out in practice by the Convention; consequently, philosophy influenced politics, and through it economics” (**loc. cit.**, p.58). How do you like this brilliant argument, to serve which Rousseau, the son of a poor Genevese Republican, turns out to be the product of aristocratical society? To refute Mr. Barth means to repeat oneself. But what are we to say of Mr. Kareyev, who applauds Barth? Ah, Mr. V.V., your “professor of history” is poor stuff, really he is! We advise you quite disinterestedly: find yourself a new “professor.”

[46.](#) Don’t imagine that we are slandering the worthy professor. He quotes with great praise the opinion of Barth, according to which “law carries on a separate, though not independent existence.” Now, it’s just this “separateness though not independence” that prevents Mr. Kareyev from mastering “the essence of the historical process.” How precisely it prevents him will be immediately shown by points *in the text*.

[47.](#) In essence this is the very psychological process which the proletariat of Europe is now going through: its psychology is already adapting itself to the new, future relations of production.

48. “Quand’essa cominciava appena a nascere nel diciassettesimo secolo, alcune nazioni avevano già da più secoli fiorito colla loro sola esperienza, da cui poscia la scienza ricava i suoi dettami.” **Storia della Economia pubblica in Italia, ecc.**, Lugano 1829, p.11. [“Even before it (political economy) began to take shape in the seventeenth century, some nations had been flourishing for several centuries relying solely on their practical experience. That experience was later used by this science for its propositions.” – *Ed.*]

John Stuart Mill repeats: “In every department of human affairs, Practice long precedes Science ... The conception, accordingly, of Political Economy as a branch of Science is extremely modern; but the subject with which its enquiries are conversant has in all ages necessarily constituted one of the chief practical interests of mankind.” **Principles of Political Economy**, London 1843, Vol.I, p.1.

49. **Rechtsstaat and Sozialismus**, Innsbruck 1881, pp.124-25.

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Editorial Notes

13*. K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, Vol.I, Moscow 1955, pp. 362-63.

14*. K. Marx, **Capital**, Vol.1, Moscow 1958, p.177.

15*. K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, Vol.I, Moscow 1955, p.363.

16*. **Ibid.**, p.368.

17*. Plekhanov here refers to L.I. Mechnikov’s book **La civilisation et les grands fleuves historiques**, avec une préface de M. Elisée Reclus, Paris 1889.

18*. Plekhanov refers to Paul Barth’s objections to Marx in **Die Geschichtsphilosophie Hegels und der Hegelianer bis auf Marx und Hartmann**, Leipzig 1890, pp.49-50.

19*. “*Slovo i delo*” *gosudarevo* (the word and deed of the sovereign) – the conventional name for the Tsarist political police method in the Russian Empire in the 18th century. To say “word and deed” meant to report state crimes.

20*. Quotation from N.I.Kareyev’s *Economic Materialism in History*, **Vestnik Yevropy**, July 1894, p.7.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Conclusion

Up to this point, in setting forth the ideas of Marx, we have been principally examining those objections which are put forward against him from the theoretical point of view. Now it is useful for us to become acquainted also with the “*practical reason*” of at any rate a certain part of his opponents. In doing so we shall use the method of *comparative history*. In other words we shall first see how the “practical reason” of the *German Utopians* met the ideas of Marx, and will thereafter turn to the reason of our dear and respected fellow countrymen.

At the end of the 40s Marx and Engels had an interesting dispute with the well-known Karl Heinzen. [1*] The dispute at once assumed a very warm character. Karl Heinzen tried to laugh out of court, as they call it, the ideas of his opponents, and displayed a skill in this occupation which in no way was inferior to the skill of Mr. Mikhailovsky. Marx and Engels, naturally, paid back in kind. [2*] The affair did not pass off without some sharp speaking. Heinzen called Engels “a thoughtless and insolent urchin”; Marx called Heinzen a representative of “*der grobianischen Literatur*,” and Engels called him “the most ignorant man of the century.” [3*] But what did the argument turn about? What views did Heinzen attribute to Marx and Engels? They were these. Heinzen assured his readers that from the point of view of Marx *there was nothing to be done in Germany of that day* by anyone filled with any generous intentions. According to Marx, said Heinzen, “there must first arrive the supremacy of the bourgeoisie, which must manufacture the factory proletariat,” which only then will begin acting on its own. [1]

Marx and Engels “did not take into account *that* proletariat which has been created

by the thirty-four German Vampires,” i.e., the whole German people, with the exception of the factory workers (the word “proletariat” means on the lips of Heinzen only the miserable condition of that people). This numerous proletariat had not in Marx’s opinion, he alleged, any right to demand a better future, because it bore on itself “*only the brand of oppression, and not the stamp of the factory*; it must patiently starve and die of hunger (*hungern und verhungern*) until Germany has become England. The factory is the school which the people must go through before-hand in order to have the right of setting about improving its position.” [2]

Anyone who knows even a little of the history of Germany knows nowadays how absurd were these charges by Heinzen. Everyone knows whether Marx and Engels closed their eyes to the miserable condition of the German people. Everyone understands whether it was right to attribute to them the idea that there was nothing for a man of generous character to do in Germany so long as it had not become England: it would seem that these men did something even without waiting for such a transformation of their country. But why did Heinzen attribute to them all this nonsense? Was it really because of his bad faith? No, we shall say again that this was not so much his fault as his misfortune. He simply did not understand the views of Marx and Engels, and therefore they seemed to him harmful; and as he passionately loved his country, he went to war against these views which were seemingly harmful to his country. But lack of comprehension is a bad adviser, and a very unreliable assistant in an argument. That was why Heinzen landed in the most absurd situation. He was a very witty person, but wit alone without understanding will not take one very far: and now the last laugh is *not on his side*.

The reader will agree that Heinzen must be seen in the same light as our quite similar argument, for example, with Mr. Mikhailovsky. And is it only Mr. Mikhailovsky? Do not all those who attribute to the “disciples” [3] the aspiration to enter the service of the Kolupayevs and Razuvayevs [4*] – and their name is legion – do not they all repeat the mistake of Heinzen? Not one of them has invented a single argument against the “economic” materialists which did not already figure, *nearly fifty years ago*, in the arguments of Heinzen. If they have anything original, it is only this—their naive ignorance of how *unoriginal* they really are. They are constantly trying to find “new paths” for Russia, and owing to their ignorance “poor Russian thought” only stumbles across tracks of European thought, full of ruts and long ago abandoned. It is strange, but quite comprehensible if we apply to the explanation of this seemingly strange phenomenon “the category of necessity.” *At a certain stage of the economic development of a country, certain well-meaning stupidities “necessarily” arise in the heads of its intellectuals.*

How comical was the position of Heinzen in his argument with Marx will be shown

by the following example. He pestered his opponents with a demand for a detailed “ideal” of the future. Tell us, he said to them, how property relations ought to be organized according to your views? What should be the limits of private property, on the one hand, and social property on the other? They re-plied to him that at every given moment the property relations of society are determined by the state of its productive forces, and that therefore one can only point out the general direction of social development, but not work out beforehand any exactly formulated draft legislation. We can already say that the socialization of labour created by modern industry must lead to the nationalization of the means of production. But one cannot say to what extent this nationalization could be carried out, say, in the next ten years: this would depend on the nature of the mutual relations between small- and large-scale industry at that time, large land-owning and peasant landed property, and so forth. Well, then you have no ideal, Heinzen concluded: a fine ideal which will be *manufactured only later, by machines!*

Heinzen adopted the *utopian* standpoint. The Utopian in working out his “ideal” always starts, as we know, from some abstract *notion* – for example, the notion of human nature – or from some abstract *principle* – for example, the principle of such and such rights of personality, or the principle of “individuality,” etc., etc. Once such a principle has been adopted, it is not difficult, starting from it, to define with the most perfect exactness and to the last detail what *ought to be* (naturally, we do not know at what time and in what circumstances) the property relations between men, for example. And it is comprehensible that the Utopian should look with astonishment at those who tell him that there cannot be property relations which are good in themselves, without any regard for the circumstances of their time and place. It seems to him that such people have absolutely no “ideals.” If the reader has followed our exposition not without attention, he knows that in that event the Utopian is often wrong. Marx and Engels had an ideal, and a very definite *ideal*: the subordination of *necessity* to *freedom*, of blind *economic forces* to the *power of human reason*. Proceeding from this ideal, they directed their practical activity accordingly – and it consisted, of course, not in serving the bourgeoisie but in developing the self-consciousness of those same producers who must, in time, become masters of their products.

Marx and Engels had no reason to “worry” about transforming Germany into England or, as people say in Russia nowadays, serving the bourgeoisie: the bourgeoisie developed without their assistance, and it was impossible to arrest that development, i.e., there were no social forces capable of doing that. And it would have been needless to do so, because the old economic order was in the last analysis no better than the bourgeois order, and in the 40s had to such an extent grown out of date that it had

become *harmful for all*. But the impossibility of arresting the development of capitalist production was not enough to deprive the thinking people of Germany of the possibility of *serving the welfare of its people*. The bourgeoisie has its inevitable fellow-travellers: all those who really serve its purse *on account of economic necessity*. The more developed the consciousness of these unwilling servants, the easier their position, the stronger their resistance to the Kolupayevs and Razuvayevs of all lands and all peoples. Marx and Engels accordingly set themselves this particular task of developing that self-consciousness: in keeping with the spirit of dialectical materialism, from the very beginning they set themselves a *completely and exclusively idealistic task*.

The criterion of the ideal is economic reality. That was what Marx and Engels said, and on this foundation they were suspected of some kind of economic Molchalinism [5*], readiness to tread down into the mud those who were economically weak and to serve the interests of the economically strong. The source of such suspicion was a *metaphysical conception of what* Marx and Engels meant by the words “*economic reality*.” When the metaphysician hears that one who serves society must take his stand on reality, he imagines that he is being advised to make his peace with that reality. He is unaware that in every economic reality there exist *contradictory elements*, and that to make his peace with reality would mean making his peace with only one of its elements, namely that which *dominates* for the moment. The dialectical materialists pointed, and point, to another element of reality, hostile to the first, and *one in which the future is maturing*. We ask: if one takes one’s stand on *that* element, if one takes *it* as the criterion of one’s “ideals,” does this mean entering the service of the Kolupayevs and Razuvayevs?

But if it is economic reality that must be the criterion of the ideal, then it is comprehensible that a *moral* criterion for the ideal is *unsatisfactory*, not because the moral feelings of men deserve indifference or contempt, but because these feelings are not enough to show us the right way of serving the interests of our neighbour. It is not enough for the doctor to sympathize with the condition of his patient: he has to reckon with the *physical reality* of the organism, to start from it in fighting it. If the doctor were to think of confining himself to moral indignation against the disease, he would deserve the most malicious ridicule. It was in this sense that Marx ridiculed the “*moralizing criticism*” and “*critical morality*” of his opponents. But his opponents thought that he was laughing at “*morality*.” “Human morality and will have no value in the eyes of men who themselves have neither morality nor will,” exclaimed Heinzen. [4]

One must, however, remark that if our Russian opponents of the “economic” materialists in general only repeat – without knowing it – the arguments of their German predecessors, nevertheless they do diversify their arguments to some extent in minor detail. Thus, for example, the German Utopians did not engage in long

dissertations about the “law of economic development” of Germany. With us, however, dissertations of that kind have assumed truly terrifying dimensions. The reader will remember that Mr. V.V., even at the very beginning of the 80s, promised that he would reveal the law of economic development of Russia. [6*] True, Mr. V.V. began later on to be frightened of that law, but himself showed at the same time that he was afraid of it only temporarily, only until the time that the Russian intellectuals discovered a very good and kind law. Generally speaking, Mr. V.V., willingly takes part in the endless discussions of whether Russia must or must not go through the phase of capitalism. As early as the 70s the teaching of Marx was dragged into these discussions.

How such discussions are carried on amongst us is shown by the latest and most up-to-date work of Mr. S. Krivenko. [7*] This author, replying to Mr. P. Struve [8*], advises his opponent to think harder about the question of the “necessity and good consequences of capitalism.”

“If the capitalist regime represents a fatal and inevitable stage of development, through which any human society must pass, if it only remains to bow one’s head before that historical necessity, should one have recourse to measures which can only delay the coming of the capitalist order and, on the contrary, should not one try to facilitate the transition to it and use all one’s efforts to promote its most rapid advent, i.e., strive to develop capitalist industry and capitalization of handicrafts, the development of kulakdom ... the destruction of the village community, the expropriation of the people from the land, generally speaking, the smoking-out of the surpluses from the villages into the factories.” [5] [9*]

Mr. S. Krivenko really puts two questions here, (1) does capitalism represent a fatal and inevitable stage, (2) if so, what practical tasks follow from it? Let us begin with the first.

Mr. S. Krivenko formulates it correctly in this sense that one, and moreover the overwhelming, part of our intellectuals did precisely concern itself with the question in that form: does capitalism represent a fatal and inevitable stage through which every human society must pass? At one time they thought that Marx replied in the affirmative to this question, and were very upset thereby. When there was published the well-known letter of Marx, allegedly to Mr. Mikhailovsky [6] [10*], they saw with surprise that Marx did not recognize the “inevitability” of this stage, and then they decided with malignant joy: hasn’t he just put to shame his Russian disciples! But those who were rejoicing forgot the French proverb: *il bien rira qui rira le dernier* (he laughs best who laughs last – *Ed.*).

From beginning to end of this dispute the opponents of the “Russian disciples” of Marx were indulging in the most “unnatural idle chatter.”

The fact is that, when they were discussing whether the historical theory of Marx was

applicable to Russia, they forgot one trifle: they forgot to ascertain what that theory consists of. And truly magnificent was the plight into which, thanks to this, our subjectivists fell, with Mr. Mikhailovsky at their head.

Mr. Mikhailovsky read (if he has read) the preface to the **Critique of Political Economy**, in which the philosophical-historical theory of Marx is set forth, and decided it was nothing more than Hegelianism. Without noticing the elephant where the elephant really was [7], Mr. Mikhailovsky began looking round, and it seemed to him that he had at last found the elephant he was looking for in the chapter about primitive capitalist accumulation – where Marx is writing about the historical progress of Western capitalism, and not at all of the whole history of humanity.

Every process is unquestionably “inevitable” where it exists. Thus, for example, the burning of a match is inevitable for it, once it has caught fire: the match “inevitably” goes out, once the process of burning has come to an end. **Capital** speaks of the course of capitalist development which was “inevitable” for those countries where that development has taken place. Imagining that in the chapter of **Capital** just mentioned he has before him an entire historical philosophy, Mr. Mikhailovsky decided that, in the opinion of Marx, capitalist production is inevitable for all countries and for all peoples. [8] Then he began to *whine* about the embarrassing position of those Russian people who, etc.; and – the joker! – having paid the necessary tribute to his subjective necessity to whine, he importantly declared, addressing himself to Mr. Zhukovsky: you see, we too know how to criticize Marx, we too do not blindly follow what “the master has said”! Naturally all this did not advance the question of “inevitability” one inch; but after reading the whining of Mr. Mikhailovsky, Marx had the intention of going to his assistance. He sketched out in the form of a letter to the editor of **Otechestoeniye Zapiski** his remarks on the article by Mr. Mikhailovsky. When, after the death of Marx, this draft appeared in our press, Russian people who, etc., had at least the *opportunity* of finding a correct solution to the question of “inevitability.”

What could Marx say about the article of Mr. Mikhailovsky? A man had fallen into misfortune, by taking the philosophical-historical theory of Marx to be that which it was not in the least. It was clear that Marx had first of all to rescue from misfortune a hopeful young Russian writer. In addition, the young Russian writer was complaining that, Marx was sentencing Russia to capitalism. He had to show the Russian writer that dialectical materialism doesn't sentence any countries to anything at all, that it doesn't point out a way which is general and “inevitable” for all nations at all times; that the further development of every given society always depends on the relationships of social forces within it; and that therefore any serious person must, without guessing or whimpering about some fantastic “inevitability,” first of all study those relations. Only such a study can show what is “inevitable” and what is not “inevitable” for the given

society.

And that's just what Marx did. First of all he revealed the "misunderstanding" of Mr. Mikhailovsky:

"The chapter on primitive accumulation does not pretend to do more than trace the path by which, *in* Western Europe, the capitalist order of economy emerged from the womb of the feudal order of economy. It therefore describes the historic movement which, by divorcing the producers from their means of production, converts them into wage-workers (proletarians in the modern sense of the word) while it converts those who possess the means of production into capitalists. In that history, 'all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the advancement of the capitalist class in course of formation ... But the basis of this whole development is the expropriation of the agricultural producer' ... At the end of the chapter the historical tendency of production is summed up thus ... that capitalist property ... cannot but transform it-self into social property. At this point I have not furnished any proof, for the good reason that this statement is itself nothing else but a general summary of long expositions previously given in the chapters on capitalist production." [11*]

In order better to clear up the circumstance that Mr. Mikhailovsky had taken to be an historical theory what was not and could not be such a theory, Marx pointed to the example of ancient Rome. A very convincing example! For indeed, if it is "inevitable" for all peoples to go through capitalism, what is to be done with Rome, what is to be done with Sparta, what is to be done with the State of the Incas, what is to be done with the many other peoples who disappeared from the historical scene without fulfilling this imaginary obligation? The fate of these peoples did not remain unknown to Marx: consequently he could not have spoken of the universal "inevitability" of the capitalist process.

"My critic," says Marx, "feels he absolutely must metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself ... But I beg his pardon. He is both honouring and shaming me too much.)" [12*]

We should think so! Such an interpretation was transforming Marx into one of those "people with a formula" whom he had already ridiculed in his polemics against Proudhon. [13*] Mr. Mikhailovsky attributed to Marx a "formula of progress," and Marx replied: no, thank you very much, I don't need these goods.

We have already seen how the Utopians regarded the laws of historical development (let the reader remember what we said about Saint-Simon). The conformity to law of historical movement assumed in their eyes a *mystical* appearance; the path along which mankind proceeds was in their imagination *marked out beforehand*, as it were, and no historical events could change the direction of that path. An interesting psychological

aberration! “Human nature” is for the Utopians the point of departure of their investigation. But the laws of development of that nature, immediately acquiring in their eyes a mysterious character, *are transferred somewhere outside man and outside the actual relationship of men*, into some “*superhistorical*” sphere.

Dialectical materialism, here also, transfers the question to quite another ground, thereby giving it quite another appearance.

The dialectical materialists “reduce everything to economics.” We have already explained how this is to be understood. But what are economics? They are the sum-total of the actual relationships of the men who constitute the given society, in their process of production. These relationships do not represent a motionless metaphysical essence. They are eternally changing under the influence of the development of the productive forces, and under the influence of the historical environment surrounding the given society. Once the actual relations of men in the process of production are given, there fatally follow from these relations certain consequences. In this sense social movement conforms to law, and no one ascertained that conformity to law better than Marx. But as the economic movement of every society has a “*peculiar*” form in consequence of the “*peculiarity*” of the conditions in which it takes place, there can be no “formula of progress” covering the past and foretelling the future of the economic movement of *all* societies. The formula of progress is that abstract truth which, in the words of the author of the **Sketches of the Gogol Period of Russian Literature**, was so pleasing to the metaphysicians. But, as he remarks himself, there is no abstract truth: truth is always concrete: everything depends on the circumstances of time and place. And if everything depends on these circumstances, it is the latter that must be studied by people who, etc. [14*]

“In order that I might be specially qualified to estimate the economic development in Russia, I learnt Russian and then for many years studied the official publications and others bearing on this subject.” [15*]

The Russian disciples of Marx are faithful to him in this case also. Of course one of them may have greater and another less extensive economic knowledge, *but what matters here is not the amount of the knowledge of individual persons, but the point of view itself*. The Russian disciples of Marx are not guided by a subjective ideal or by some “formula of progress,” but turn to the economic reality of their country.

To what conclusion, then, did Marx come regarding Russia? “If Russia continues to pursue the path she has followed since 1861, she will lose the finest chance ever offered by history to a people and undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime.” A little further on Marx adds that in recent years Russia “has been taking a lot of trouble”

in the sense of proceeding along the path mentioned. Since the letter was written (i.e., since 1877), we will add for our part, Russia has been moving along that path still further and ever more quickly.

What then follows from Marx's letter? Three conclusions:

1. He shamed by his letter not his Russian disciples, but the subjectivist gentlemen who, not having the least conception of his scientific point of view, were attempting to refashion Marx himself after their own likeness and image, and to transform him into *a metaphysician and utopian*.
2. The subjectivist gentlemen were not *ashamed* of the letter for the simple reason that true to their "ideal" they didn't understand the letter either.
3. If the subjectivist gentlemen want to argue with us on the question of how and where Russia is moving, they must at every given moment start from an *analysis of economic reality*.

The study of that reality in the 70s brought Marx to the *conditional* conclusion:

"If Russia continues to pursue the path she has followed since the emancipation of the peasantry ... she will become a perfect capitalist nation ... and after that, once fallen in the bondage of the capitalist regime, she will experience the pitiless laws of capitalism like other profane peoples. That is all." [16*]

That is all. But a Russian desiring to work for the welfare of his native land cannot be satisfied with such a conditional conclusion. The question will inevitably arise in his mind, will Russia continue to proceed along this path? Do data by any chance exist which allow one to hope that she will leave this path?

In order to reply to this question, one must once again turn to a study of the actual position of the country, an analysis of its present-day internal life. The Russian disciples of Marx, *on the basis of such an analysis*, assert that *she will continue*. *There are no data allowing one to hope that Russia will soon leave the path of capitalist development upon which it entered after 1861. That is all!*

The subjectivist gentlemen think that the "disciples" are mistaken. They will have to prove it with the help of data supplied by the same Russian *actuality*. The "disciples" say: Russia will continue to proceed along the path of capitalist development, not because there exists some external force, some mysterious law pushing it along that path, but because there is no effective internal force capable of pushing it from that path. If the subjectivist gentlemen think that there is such a force, let them say what it consists of, and let them prove its presence. We shall be very glad to hear them out. Up to now we have not heard anything definite from them on this score.

“What do you mean: there is no force? And what about our ideals?” exclaim our dear opponents.

Oh gentlemen, gentlemen! Really you are touchingly simple! The very question is, how to realize, even for the sake of argument, your ideals – though they represent something fairly muddled? Put in this way, the question, naturally, sounds very prosaic, but so long as it is unanswered, your “ideals” will have only an “ideal” significance.

Imagine that a young hero has been brought into a prison of stone, put behind iron bars, surrounded by watchful guards. The young hero only smiles. He takes a bit of charcoal he has put away beforehand, draws a little boat on the wall, takes his seat in the boat and ... fare-well prison, farewell watchful guards, the young hero is once again at large in the wide world.

A beautiful story! But it is ... *only a story*. In reality, a little boat drawn on the wall has *never carried anyone away anywhere*.

Already since the time of the abolition of serfdom Russia has patently entered the path of capitalist development. The subjectivist gentlemen see this perfectly well, and themselves assert that our old economic relations are breaking up with amazing and constantly increasing speed. But that’s nothing, they say to one another: we shall embark Russia in the little boat of our ideals, and she will float away from this path beyond distant lands, into far-off realms.

The subjectivist gentlemen are good story-tellers, but ... “*that is all!*” That is all – and that’s terribly little, and never before have stories changed the historical movement of a people, for the same prosaic reason that not a single nightingale has ever been well fed on fables. [17*]

The subjectivist gentlemen have adopted a strange classification of “Russian people who ...” – into two categories. Those who *believe* in the possibility of floating away on the little boat of the subjective ideal are recognized as good people, true well-wishers of the people. But those who say that that faith *is absolutely unfounded* are attributed a kind of unnatural malignancy, the determination to make the Russian *muzhik* die of hunger. No melodrama has ever had such villains as must be, in the opinion of the subjectivist gentlemen, the consistent Russian “economic” materialists. This amazing opinion is just as well founded as was that of Heinzen, which the readers already know, when he attributed to Marx the intention of leaving the German people “*hungern und verhungern*.”

Mr. Mikhailovsky asks himself why is it that just now gentlemen have appeared who are capable “with a tranquil conscience to condemn millions of people to starvation and

poverty?” Mr. S.N. Krivenko thinks that once a consistent person has decided that capitalism is inevitable in Russia it “remains for him only to strive to develop ... capitalization of handicrafts, the development of kulakdom ... the destruction of the village community, the expropriation of the people from the land and, generally speaking, the smoking-out of the surplus peasantry from the villages.” Mr. S.N. Krivenko thinks so only because he himself is incapable of “*consistent*” thinking.

Heinzen did at least recognize in Marx a prejudice in favour of toilers who bore the “factory stamp.” The subjectivist gentlemen evidently do not recognize even this little weakness in the “Russian disciples of Marx”: they, forsooth, consistently hate all the sons of man, without exception. They would like to starve them all to death, with the exception possibly of the representatives of the merchant estate. In reality, if Mr. Krivenko had admitted any good intentions in the “disciples,” as regards the factory workers, he would not have written the lines just quoted.

“To strive ... generally speaking, for the smoking-out of the surplus peasantry from the villages.” The saints preserve us! Why strive? Surely the influx of new labour into the factory population will lead to a lowering of wages. And even Mr. Krivenko knows that lowering of wages cannot be beneficial and pleasant for the workers. Why should the consistent “disciples,” then, try to do harm to the workman and bring him unpleasantness? Obviously these people are consistent only in their hatred of mankind, they don’t even love the factory worker! Or perhaps they do love him, but in their own peculiar way – they love him and therefore they try to do him harm: “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” Strange people! Remarkable consistency!

“To strive ... for the development of kulakdom, the destruction of the village commune, the expropriation of the people from the land.” What horrors! But why strive for all this? Surely the development of kulakdom and the expropriation of the people from the land may reflect themselves in the lowering of their purchasing power, and the lowering of their purchasing power will lead to a reduction of demand for factory goods, will reduce the demand for labour, i.e., will lower wages. No, the consistent “disciples” don’t love the working man; and is it only the working man? For surely the reduction in the purchasing power of the people will harmfully affect even the interests of the employers who constitute, the subjectivist gentlemen assure us, the object of the “disciples” most tender care. No, you can say what you like, but these disciples are really queer people!

“To strive ... for the capitalization of handicrafts” .. not to “stick at either the buying-up of peasant land, or the opening of shops and public houses, or at any other shady occupation.” But why should consistent people do all this? Surely they are convinced of the inevitability of the capitalist process; consequently, if the introduction

of public houses were an essential part of that process, there would inevitably appear public houses (which, one must suppose, do not exist at present). It seems to Mr. Krivenko that shady activity must accelerate the capitalist process. But, we shall say again, if capitalism is inevitable, “shadiness” will appear of its own accord. Why should the consistent disciples of Marx so “strive” for it?

“Here their theory grows silent before the demands of moral feeling: they see that shadiness is inevitable, they adore it for that inevitability, and from all sides they hasten to its assistance, or else maybe that poor inevitable shadiness will not get the upper hand soon enough, without our assistance.”

Is that so, Mr. Krivenko? If it is not, then all your arguments about the “consistent” disciples are worthless. And if it is, then your personal consistency and your own “capacity of cognition” are worthless.

Take whatever you like, even though it be the capitalization of handicrafts. It represents a two-fold process: there appear first of all people who *accumulate* in their hands the means of production, and secondly people who *make use of* these means of production for a certain payment. Let us suppose that shadiness is the distinguishing feature of persons of the first category; but surely the people who work for them for hire may, it might seem, escape that “phase” of moral development? And if so, what will there be shady in my activity if I devote it to those people, if I develop their self-consciousness and defend their material interests? Mr. Krivenko will say perhaps that such activity will delay the development of capitalism. Not in the least. The example of England, France and Germany will show him that in those countries such activity has not only not delayed the development of capitalism but, on the contrary, has accelerated it, and by the way has thereby brought nearer the practical solution of some of their “accursed” problems.

Or let us take the destruction of the village community. This also is a two-fold process: the peasant holdings are being concentrated in the hands of the kulaks, and an ever-growing number of previously independent peasants are being transformed into proletarians. All this, naturally, is accompanied by a clash of interests, by struggle. The “Russian disciple” appears on the scene, attracted by the noise: he lifts up his voice in a brief but deeply-felt hymn to the “category of necessity” and ... *opens a public house!* That’s how the most “consistent” among them will act: the more moderate man will confine himself to opening a *little shop*. That’s it, isn’t it, Mr. Krivenko? But why shouldn’t the “disciple” take the side of the village poor?

“But if he wants to take their side, he will have to try and interfere with their expropriation from the land?” *All right, let’s admit it: that’s what he must try for.* “But

that will delay the development of capitalism.” *It won't delay it in the least.* On the contrary, it will even accelerate it. The subjectivist gentlemen are always imagining that the village community “of itself” tends to pass into some “higher form.” They are mistaken. The only real tendency of the village community *is the tendency to break up*, and the better the conditions of the peasantry, the sooner would the community break up. Moreover, that break-up can take place in conditions which are *more or less advantageous for the people*. The “disciples” must “strive” to see to it that the break-up takes place in conditions *most advantageous for the people*.

“But why not prevent the break-up itself?”

And why didn't you prevent the famine of 1891? You couldn't? We believe you, and we should consider our cause lost if all we had left were to make *your morality* responsible for such *events* which were independent of your will, instead of refuting your *views* with the help of *logical arguments*. But why then do you pay us back in a different measure? Why, in arguments with us, do you represent the poverty of the people as though we were responsible for it? Because where *logic* cannot help you, sometimes *words* can, particularly *pitiful words*. You could not prevent the famine of 1891? Who then will go bail that you will be able to prevent the break-up of the village community, the expropriation of the peasantry from their land? Let us take the middle path, so dear to eclectics: let's imagine that in some cases you will succeed in preventing all this. Well, but in those cases where your efforts prove unsuccessful, where in spite of them the community nevertheless breaks up, where the peasants nevertheless prove landless – how will you act with these victims of the fateful process? Charon carried across the Styx only those souls who were able to pay him for his work. Will you begin to take into your little boat, for transporting into the realm of the subjective ideal, only genuine members of the village commune? Will you begin using your oars to beat off the village proletarians? Probably you yourselves will agree, gentlemen, that this would be very “*shady*.” And once you agree with this, you will have to act in their regard in just the same way as, in your opinion, any decent man will have to act, i.e., not to set up public houses to sell them dope, but to increase their strength of *resistance* to the public house, to the publican and to every other dope which history serves up, or will serve up, to them.

Or perhaps it is we now who are beginning to tell fairy-tales? Perhaps the village community is *not* breaking up? Perhaps the expropriation of the people from the land is *not* in fact taking place? Perhaps we invented this with the sole aim of plunging the peasant into poverty, after he had hitherto been enjoying an enviably prosperous existence? Then open any investigation by your own partisans, and it will show you how matters have stood up to now, i.e., before even a single “disciple” has opened a public house or started a little shop. When you argue with us, you represent matters as though

the people are already living in the realm of your subjective ideals, while we, through our inherent hatred of mankind, are dragging them down by the feet, into the prose of capitalism. But matters stand in exactly the opposite way. It is the capitalist prose that exists, and we are asking our-selves, how can this prose be fought, how can we put the people in a situation even somewhat approaching the “ideal”? You may find that we are giving the wrong answer to the question: but why distort our intentions? [18*] Really, you know, that is “shady”: really such “*criticism*” is unworthy even of “*Suzdal folks*.” [19*]

But how then can one fight the capitalist prose which, we repeat, already exists independently of our and your efforts? You have one reply: to “consolidate the village community,” to strengthen the connection of the peasant with the land. And we reply that that is an answer worthy only of Utopians. Why? Because it is an abstract answer. According to your opinion, the village community is good always and everywhere, while in our opinion there is no abstract truth, truth is always concrete, everything depends on the circumstances of time and place. There was a time when the village community could be advantageous for the *whole* people; there are probably even now places where it is of advantage to the agriculturists. It is not we who will begin a revolt against *such* a community. But in a number of cases the village community has been transformed into a means of *exploiting* the peasant. Against such a commune we revolt, just as against everything that is harmful for the people. Remember the peasant whom G.I. Uspensky makes pay “*for nothing*.” [20*] What should one do with him, in your opinion? Transport him into the realm of the ideal, you reply. Very good, transport him with God’s help. But while he has not yet been transported, while he has not yet taken his seat on the little boat of the ideal, while the little boat has not yet sailed up to him and as yet we don’t know when it will do so, wouldn’t it be better for him to be free from paying “for nothing”? Wouldn’t it be better for him to stop being a member of a village community which only means that he will have absolutely unproductive expenses, and perhaps in addition only a periodical flogging at the *volost* office? We think it *would*, but you charge us for this with intending to starve the people to death. Is that just? Isn’t there something “shady” about it? Or perhaps you really are incapable of understanding us? Can that really be so? Chaadayev said once that the Russian doesn’t even know the syllogism of the West. [21*] Can that really be just your case? We will admit that Mr. S. Krivenko quite sincerely does not understand this; we admit it also in relation to Mr. Kareyev and Mr. Yuzhakov. [22*] But Mr. Mikhailovsky always seemed to us a man of a much more “acute” mind.

What have you invented, gentlemen, to improve the lot of the millions of peasants who have in fact lost their land? When it is a question of people who pay “for nothing,” you are able only to give one piece of advice: al-though he does pay “for nothing,”

nevertheless he mustn't destroy his connection with the village community because, once it has been destroyed, it can never be restored. Of course, this will involve temporary inconvenience for those who pay for nothing, but ... "what the *muzhik* suffers is no disaster." [23*]

And that's just how it turns out that our subjectivist gentlemen are ready to bring the most vital *interests of the people as a sacrifice to their ideals! And that is just how it turns out that their preaching in reality is becoming more and more hurtful for the people.*

"To be an enthusiast had become her social vocation," says Tolstoi about Anna Pavlovna Sherer. [24*] To hate capitalism has become the social vocation of our subjectivists. What good could the enthusiasm of an old maid do Russia? None whatsoever. What good does the "subjective" hatred of capitalism do the Russian producers? Also none whatsoever.

But the enthusiasm of Anna Pavlovna was at least harmless. The utopian hatred of capitalism is beginning to do positive harm to the Russian producer, because it makes our intellectuals extremely unsqueamish about the means of consolidating the village community. Scarcely does anyone mention such consolidation when immediately a darkness falls in which all cats seem grey, and the subjectivist gentlemen are ready warmly to embrace the **Moskovskiye Vedomosti**. [25*] And all this "subjective" darkening of the intellect goes precisely to aid that *public house* which the "disciples" are alleged to be ready to cultivate. It's shameful to say it, but sinful to hide, that *the utopian enemies of capitalism prove in reality to be the accomplices of capitalism in its most coarse, shameful and harmful form.*

Up to now we have been speaking of Utopians who have tried, or nowadays try, to invent some argument or other *against Marx*. Let us see now how those Utopians behave, or behaved, who were *inclined to quote from him*.

Heinzen, whom the Russian subjectivists now reproduce with such astonishing accuracy in their arguments with the "Russian disciples," was a Utopian of a democratic-bourgeois tendency. But there were many Utopians of an opposite tendency [26*] in Germany in the 40s.

The social and economic position of Germany was then in broad outline as follows.

On the one hand, the bourgeoisie was rapidly developing, and insistently demanding every kind of assistance and support from the German governments. The well-known Zollverein (Customs Union – *Ed.*) was entirely the result of its work, and advocacy in favour of it was carried on not only with the help of "petitions," but also by means of

more or less scientific research: let us recall the name of Friedrich List. [27*] On the other hand, the destruction of the old economic “foundations” had left the German people defenceless in relation to capitalism. The peasants and handicraftsmen were already sufficiently involved in the process of capitalist advance to experience on themselves all its disadvantageous sides, which make themselves felt with particular force in *transitional periods*. But the working mass was at that time still little capable of resistance. It could not as yet withstand the representatives of capital to any noticeable extent. Way back *in the 60s* Marx said that Germany was suffering simultaneously both *from the development of capitalism and from the insufficiency of its development*. In the 40s her sufferings from the insufficiency of development of capitalism were even greater. Capitalism had destroyed the old foundations of peasant life; the *handicraft* industry, which had previously flourished in Germany, now had to withstand the competition of *machine* production, which was much too strong for it. The handicraftsmen grew poorer, falling every year more and more into helpless dependence on the *middlemen*. And at the same time the peasants had to discharge a long series of such services, in relation to the landlords and the state, as might perhaps have been bearable in previous days, but in the 40s became all the more oppressive because they less and less corresponded to the actual conditions of peasant life. The poverty of the peasantry reached astounding dimensions; the kulak became the complete master of the village; the peasant grain was frequently bought by him while it was still not yet reaped; begging had become a kind of seasonal occupation. Investigators at that time pointed out village communities in which, out of several thousand families, only a few hundred were not engaged in begging. In other places – a thing almost incredible, but placed on record at the time by the German press – the *peasants fed on carrion*. Leaving their villages, they could not find sufficient employment in the industrial centres, and the press pointed out the growing unemployment and the increasing emigration which it was producing.

Here is how one of the most advanced organs of the time describes the position of the working mass:

“One hundred thousand spinners in the Ravensberg district, and in other places of the German Fatherland, can no longer live by their own labour, and can no longer find an outlet for their manufacture” (it was a question chiefly of handicraftsmen). “They seek work and bread, without finding one or the other, because it is difficult if not impossible for them to find employment outside spinning. There exists a vast competition among the workers for the most miserable wage.” [9]

The morality of the people was undoubtedly declining. The destruction of old *economic relations* was paralleled by the shattering of old *moral notions*. The newspapers and journals of that time were filled with complaints of drunkenness among the workers, of sexual dissoluteness in their midst; of coxcombry and extravagance which developed

among them, side by side with the decrease in their wages. There were no signs as yet in the German workman of a *new* morality, that morality which began rapidly to develop later, on the basis of the new movement of emancipation aroused by the very development of capitalism. The mass movement for emancipation was not even beginning at that time. The dull discontent of the mass made itself felt from time to time only in hopeless strikes and aimless revolts, in the senseless destruction of machines. But the sparks of consciousness were beginning to fall into the heads of the German workmen. Books which had represented an unnecessary luxury under the old order became an article of necessity in the new conditions. A passion for reading began to take possession of the workers.

Such was the state of affairs with which the right-thinking portion of the German intellectuals (*der Gebildeten* – as they said then) had to reckon. What was to be done, how could the people be helped? *By eliminating capitalism*, replied the intellectuals. The works of Marx and Engels which appeared at that time were joyfully accepted by part of the German intellectuals as constituting a number of new scientific arguments *in favour of the necessity of eliminating capitalism*.

“While the liberal politicians have with new strength begun to sound List’s trumpet of the protective tariff, trying to assure us ... that they are worrying about an expansion of industry mainly in the interests of the working class, while their opponents, the enthusiasts of free trade, have been trying to prove that England has become the flourishing and classical country of trade and industry not at all in consequence of protection, the excellent book of Engels on the condition of the working class in England has made a most timely appearance, and has destroyed the last illusions. All have recognized that this book constitutes one of the most remarkable works of modern times ... By a number of irrefutable proofs it has ‘shown into what an abyss that society hurries to fall which makes its motive principle personal greed, the free competition of private employers, for whom money is their God.’ [10]

And so capitalism must be eliminated, or else Germany will fall into that abyss at the bottom of which England is already lying. This has been proved by Engels. And who will eliminate capitalism? The intellectuals, *die Gebildeten*. The peculiarity of Germany, in the words of one of these *Gebildeten*, was precisely that it was the German intellectuals who were called upon to eliminate capitalism in her, while “in the West” (*in den westlichen Ländern*) “it is more the workmen who are fighting it.” [11] But how will the German intellectuals eliminate capitalism? By organizing production (*Organisation der Arbeit*). And what must the intellectuals do to organize production? **Allgemeines Volksblatt** which was published at Cologne in 1845 proposed the following measures:

1. Promotion of popular education, organization of popular lectures, concerts, etc.
2. Organization of big workshops in which workmen, artisans and

handicraftsmen could work for themselves, not for an employer or a merchant. **Allgemeines Volksblatt** hoped that in time these artisans and handicraftsmen would themselves, on their own initiative, be grouped in an association.

3. Establishment of stores for the sale of the goods manufactured by the artisans and handicraftsmen, and also by national workshops.

These measures would save Germany from the evils of capitalism. And it was all the more, easy to adopt them, added the sheet we have quoted, because “here and there people have already begun to establish permanent stores, so-called industrial bazaars, in which artisans can put out their goods for sale,” and immediately receive a certain advance on account of them ... Then followed an exposition of the advantages which would follow from all this, both for the producer and for the consumer.

The elimination of capitalism seems easiest of all where *it is still poorly developed*. Therefore the German Utopians frequently and willingly underlined the circumstance that Germany was not yet England: Heinzen was even ready flatly to deny the existence of a factory proletariat in Germany. But since, for the Utopians, the chief thing was to prove to “society” the necessity of organizing production, they passed at times, without difficulty and without noticing it, over to the standpoint of people who asserted that *German capitalism could no longer develop any further, in consequence of its inherent contradictions, that the internal market had already been saturated, that the purchasing power of the population was falling, that the conquest of external markets was improbable and that therefore the number of workers engaged in manufacturing industry must inevitably and constantly diminish*. This was the point of view adopted by the journal **Der Gesellschafts-Spiegel**, which we have quoted several times, and which was one of the chief organs of the German Utopians of that day, after the appearance of the interesting pamphlet of L. Buhl: **Andeutungen über die Noth der arbeitenden Klassen and über die Aufgabe der Vereine zum Wohl derselben (Suggestions on the needy state of the working class and on the tasks of the unions for the welfare thereof – Ed.)**, Berlin 1845. Buhl asked himself, were the unions for promoting the welfare of the working class in a position to cope with their task? In order to reply to this question, he put forward another, namely, whence arose at the present time the poverty of the working class? The poor man and the proletarian are not at all one and the same thing, says Buhl. The poor man won't or can't work; the proletarian seeks work, he is capable of doing it, but it does not exist, and he falls into poverty. Such a phenomenon was quite unknown in previous times, although there always were the poor and there were always the oppressed - for example, the serfs.

Where did the proletarian come from? He was created by *competition*. Competition,

which broke the old bonds that fettered production, brought forth an unprecedented industrial prosperity. But it also forces employers to lower the price of their goods. Therefore they try to reduce wages or the number of the employed. The latter object is achieved by the perfecting of machinery, which throws many workers on to the streets. Moreover, artisans cannot stand up to the competition of machine production, and are also transformed into proletarians. Wages fall more and more. Buhl points to the example of the cotton print industry, which was flourishing in Germany as late as the 20s. Wages were then very high. A good workman could earn from 18 to 20 thalers a week. But machines appeared, and with them female and child labour – and wages fell terribly. The principle of free competition acts thus always and everywhere, wherever it achieves predominance. *It leads to overproduction*, and overproduction to unemployment, And the more developed becomes large-scale industry, the more unemployment grows and the smaller becomes the number of workmen engaged in industrial undertakings. That this is really so is shown by the fact that the disasters mentioned occur only in industrial countries. Agricultural countries don't know them. But the state of affairs created by free competition is extremely dangerous for society (*für die Gesellschaft*), and therefore society cannot remain indifferent to it. What then must society do? Here Buhl turns to the question which holds first place, so to speak, in his work: is any *union* at all able to eradicate the poverty of the working class?

The local Berlin union for assisting the working class has set itself the object “not so much of eliminating existing poverty, as of preventing the appearance of poverty in the future.” It is to this union that Buhl now turns. How will you prevent the appearance of poverty in the future, he asks: what will you do for this purpose? The poverty of the modern worker arises from the lack of demand for his labour. The worker needs not charity but work. But where will the union get work from? In order that the demand for labour should increase, it is necessary that the demand for the products of labour should increase. But this demand is diminishing, thanks to the diminution of the earnings of the working mass. Or perhaps the union will discover new markets? Buhl does not think that possible either. He comes to the conclusion that the task which the Berlin union has set itself is merely a “*well-intentioned illusion*.”

Buhl advises the Berlin union to meditate more deeply on the causes of the poverty of the working class, before beginning the struggle against it. He considers *palliatives* to be of no importance. “Labour exchanges, savings banks and pension funds, and the like, can of course improve the position of a few individuals: but they will not eradicate the evil.” Nor will associations do that: “Associations also will not escape the harsh necessity (*dura necessitas*) of competition.”

Where Buhl himself discerned the means of eradicating the evil, it is difficult to ascertain exactly from his pamphlet. It seems as though he hints that the interference of

the state is necessary to remedy the evil, adding however that the result of such interference would be *doubtful*. At any rate, his pamphlet made a deep impression on the German intellectuals at that time; and not at all in the sense of disillusioning them. On the contrary, they saw in it a new proof of *the necessity of organizing labour*.

Here is what the journal **Der Gesellschafts-Spiegel** wrote of Buhl's pamphlet:

“The well-known Berlin writer L. Buhl has published a work entitled **Andeutungen, etc.** He thinks – and we share his opinion – that the miseries of the working class follow from the excess of productive forces; that that excess is the consequence of free competition and of the latest discoveries and inventions in physics and mechanics; that a return to guilds and corporations would be just as harmful as impeding discoveries and inventions; that therefore *in existing social conditions*” (the italics are those of the writer of the review) “there are no effective means of helping the workmen. Assuming that present-day egotistical private-enterprise relations remain unchanged, one must agree with Buhl that no union will be in a position to abolish the existing poverty. But such an assumption is not at all necessary; on the contrary, there could arise and already do arise unions the aim of which is to eliminate by peaceful means the above-mentioned egotistical basis of our society. All that is necessary is that the government should not handicap the activity of such unions.”

It is clear that the reviewer had not understood, or had not wished to understand, Buhl's idea: but this is not important for us. We turned to Germany only in order, with the help of the lessons provided by *her* history, better to understand certain intellectual tendencies in present-day Russia. And in this sense the movement of the German intellectuals of the 40s comprises much that is instructive for us.

In the first place, the line of argument of Buhl reminds us of that of Mr. N. —on. Both one and the other begin by pointing to the development of the productive forces as the reason for the decline in the demand for labour, and consequently for the relative reduction of the number of workers. Both one and the other speak of the saturation of the internal market, and of the necessity arising therefrom of a further diminution in the demand for labour. Buhl did not admit, apparently, the possibility that the Germans might conquer foreign markets; Mr. N. —n resolutely refuses to recognize this possibility as regards the Russian manufacturers. Finally, both one and the other leave this question of foreign markets entirely without investigation: neither brings forward a single serious argument in favour of his opinion. [28*]

Buhl makes no obvious conclusion from his investigation, except that one must meditate more deeply on the position of the working class before helping it. Mr. N. —on comes to the conclusion that our society is faced with, true, a difficult but not an insoluble task—that of organizing our national production. But if we supplement the views of Buhl by the considerations set forth in connection with them by the reviewer of

Der Gesellschafts-Spiegel whom we have quoted, the result is precisely the conclusion of Mr. N. —on. *Mr. N. —on = Buhl + the reviewer*. And this “formula” leads us to the following reflections.

Mr. N. —on in our country is called a Marxist, and even the only “true” Marxist. But can it be said that the sum of the views of Buhl and his reviewer on the position of Germany in the 40s was equivalent to the views of Marx on the same position? In other words, was Buhl supplemented by his reviewer, a Marxist — and withal the only true Marxist, the Marxist *par excellence*? Of course not. From the fact that Buhl pointed out the contradiction into which capitalist society fails, thanks to the development of the productive forces, it does not yet follow that he adopted the point of view of Marx. He examined these contradictions from a very abstract point of view, and already thanks to this alone his investigation had not, *in its spirit*, anything in common with the views of Marx. After hearing Buhl one might have thought that German capitalism, *today or tomorrow*, would be suffocated under the weight of its own development, that it had nowhere any longer to go, that handicrafts had been finally capitalized, and that the number of German workers would rapidly decline. Such views Marx never expressed. On the contrary, when he had occasion to speak of the immediate future of German capitalism, at the end of the 40s and particularly at the beginning of the 50s, he said something quite different. Only people who did not in the least understand his views could have considered the German N. —ons to be true Marxists. [12]

The German N. —ons argued just as abstractly as our present Buhls and Vollgrafs. To argue abstractly means to make mistakes, even in those cases when you start from an absolutely correct principle. Do you know, reader, what were the *antiphysics* of D’Alembert? D’Alembert said that, on the basis of the most unquestionable physical laws, he would prove the inevitability of phenomena which were quite impossible in reality. One must only, in following the operation of every given law, forget for the time being that there exist other laws altering its operation. The result would certainly be quite nonsensical. To prove this D’Alembert gave several really brilliant examples, and even intended to write a complete *antiphysics* in his leisure moments. The Messrs. Vollgrafs and N. —ons are already writing an *anti-economics*, not as a joke but quite seriously. Their method is as follows. They take a certain indisputable economic law, and correctly indicate its *tendency*; then they forget that the realization of this law is in life an *entire historical process*, and represent matters as though the tendency of the law in question had already been *completely put into effect* by the time they began writing their work. If at the same time the Vollgraf, Buhl or N. —on in question accumulates a pile of ill-digested statistical material, and sets about relevantly and irrelevantly quoting Marx, his “sketch” acquires the appearance of a scientific and convincing piece of research, in the spirit of the author of **Capital**. But this is an optical

illusion, no more.

That, for example, Vollgraf left out a great deal in analyzing the economic life of the Germany of his day is shown by an indubitable fact: his prophecy about “*the decomposition of the social organism*” of that country completely failed to materialize. And that Mr. N. —on quite in vain makes use of the name of Marx, just as Mr. Y. Zhukovsky in vain used to have recourse to the integral calculus, even the most worthy S.N. Krivenko will understand without difficulty.

In spite of the opinion of those gentlemen who reproach Marx with one-sidedness, that writer never examined the economic progress of a particular country *apart from its connection with those social forces which, growing up on its basis, themselves influenced its further development*. (This is not yet quite clear to you, Mr. S.N. Krivenko: but patience!) Once a certain economic condition is known, certain social forces become known, and their action will necessarily affect the further development of that condition (is patience deserting you, Mr. Krivenko? Here is a practical example for you). We know the economy of England in the epoch of primitive capitalist accumulation. Thereby we know the social forces which, by the way, sat in the English parliament of that day. The action of those social forces was the necessary condition for the further development of the known economic situation, while the direction of their action was conditioned by the characteristics of that situation.

Once we know the economic situation of modern England, *we* know thereby her modern social forces, the action of which will tell in her future economic development. When Marx was engaged in what some please to call his guesswork, he took into account these social forces, and did not imagine that their action could be stopped at will by this or that group of persons, strong only in their excellent intentions (“*Mit der Gründlichkeit der geschichtlichen Action wird der Umfang der Masse zunehmen, deren Action sie ist*”) (“Together with the thoroughness of the historical action will also grow the volume of the mass whose action it is.” — *Ed.*).

The German Utopians of the 40s argued otherwise. When they set themselves certain tasks, they had in mind only the adverse sides of the economic situation of their country, forgetting to investigate the social forces which had grown up from that situation. The economic situation of our people is distressful, argued the above-mentioned reviewer: consequently we are faced with the difficult but not insoluble problem of organizing production. But will not that organization be prevented by those same social forces which have grown up on the basis of the distressful economic situation? The well-meaning reviewer did not ask himself this question. The Utopian never reckons sufficiently with the social forces of his age, for the simple reason that, to use the expression of Marx, he always *places himself above society*. And for the same

reason, again to use the expression of Marx, all the calculations of the Utopian prove to be made “*ohne Wirth gemacht*” (“without reckoning with his host” – *Ed.*), and all his “criticism” is no more than complete absence of criticism, incapacity critically to look at the reality around him.

The organization of production in a particular country could arise only as a result of the operation of those social forces which existed in that country. What is necessary for the organization of production? The conscious attitude of the producers to the process of production, *taken in all its complexity and totality*. Where there is no such conscious attitude as yet, only those people can put forward the idea of organizing production as the immediate task of society, who remain incorrigible Utopians all their lives, even though they should repeat the name of Marx five milliard times with the greatest respect. What does Mr. N. —on say about the consciousness of the producers in his notorious book? Absolutely nothing: he pins his hope on the consciousness of “society.” If after this he can and must be recognized as a true Marxist, we see no reason why one should not recognize Mr. Krivenko as being the only true Hegelian of our age, the Hegelian *par excellence*.

But it is time to conclude. What results have *we* achieved by our use of the comparative historical method? If we are not mistaken, they are the following:

1. The Conviction of Heinzen and his adherents that Marx was condemned by his own views to inaction in Germany proved to be nonsense. Equally nonsense will also prove the conviction of Mr. Mikhailovsky that the persons who nowadays, in Russia, hold the views of Marx cannot bring any benefit to the Russian people, but on the contrary must injure it.
2. The views of the Buhls and Vollgrafs on the economic situation of Germany at that time proved to be narrow, one-sided and mistaken because of their abstract character. There is ground for fear that the further economic history of Russia will disclose the same defects in the views of Mr. N. -on.
3. The people who in Germany of the 40s made their immediate task the organization of production were Utopians. Similar Utopians are the people who talk about organizing production in present-day Russia.
4. History has swept away the illusions of the German Utopians of the 40s. There is every justification for thinking that the same fate will overtake the illusions of our Russian Utopians. Capitalism laughed at the first; with pain in our heart, we foresee that it will laugh at the second as well.

But did these illusions really bring no benefit to the German people? In the economic sense, absolutely none —or, if you require a more exact expression, *almost* none. All these bazaars for selling handicraft goods, and all these attempts to create producers’

associations, scarcely eased the position of even a hundred German producers. But they promoted the awakening of the self-consciousness of those producers, and thereby did them a great deal of good. The same benefit, but this time directly and not in a roundabout way, was rendered by the educational activity of the German intellectuals: their schools, people's reading rooms, etc. The consequences of capitalist development which were harmful for the German people could be, at every particular moment, weakened or eliminated only to the extent to which the self-consciousness of the German producers developed. Marx understood this better than the Utopians, and therefore his activity proved more beneficial to the German people.

The same, undoubtedly, will be the case in Russia too. No later than in the October issue of **Russkoye Bogatstvo** for 1894, Mr. S.N. Krivenko "worries" – as we say – about the organization of Russian production. [30*] Mr. Krivenko will eliminate nothing and make no one happy by these "worries." His "worries" are clumsy, awkward, barren: but if they, in spite of all these negative qualities, awaken the self-consciousness of even one producer, they will prove beneficial - and then it will turn out that Mr. Krivenko has lived on this earth not only in order to make mistakes in logic, or to give wrong translations of extracts from foreign articles which he found "disagreeable." It will be possible in our country, too, to fight against the harmful consequences of our capitalism only to the extent that there develops the self-consciousness of the producer. And from these words of ours the subjectivist gentlemen can see that we are not at all "crude materialists." If we are "narrow," it is only in one sense: that we set before ourselves, first and foremost, a perfectly *idealistic aim*.

And now until we meet again, gentlemen opponents! We taste beforehand all that greatest of pleasures which your objections will bring us. Only, gentlemen, do keep an eye on Mr. Krivenko. Even though he doesn't write badly, and at any rate does so with feeling, yet "to put two and two together" – that has not been vouchsafed him!

Appendix 1

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Footnotes

1. **Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus**, Bern 1848, p.12,

2. **Ibid.**, p.22.

3. “Disciples” was the “Aesopian” word for Marxists. – *Ed.*
4. **Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus**, Bern 1848, S.22.
5. **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, December 1893, Part II, p. 189.
6. In this draft unfinished sketch of a letter, Marx writes not to Mr. Mikhailovsky, but to the Editor of **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**. Marx speaks of Mr. Mikhailovsky in the third person.
7. There is a well-known Russian story of the man who went to the zoo and “didn’t notice” the elephant. – *Tr.*
8. See the article, *Karl Marx before the Judgement of Mr. Y. Zhukovsky*, in **Otechestvenniye Zapiski** for October 1877. “In the sixth chapter of **Capital** there is a paragraph headed: *The so-called primitive accumulation*. Here Marx had in view a historical sketch of the first steps in the capitalist process of production, but he provided something which is much more—an entire philosophical-historical theory.” We repeat that all this is absolute nonsense: the historical philosophy of Marx is set forth in the preface to the **Critique of Political Economy**, so incomprehensible for Mr. Mikhailovsky, in the shape of “a few generalizing ideas, most intimately interconnected.” But this in passing. Mr. Mikhailovsky has managed not to understand Marx even in what referred to the “inevitability” of the capitalist process for the West. He has seen in factory legislation a “correction” to the fatal inflexibility of the historical process. Imagining that according to Marx “*the economic*” acts on its own, without any part played by men, he was consistent in seeing a correction in every intervention by men in the course of their process of production. The only thing he did not know was that according to Marx that very intervention, *in every given form*, is the inevitable product of the given economic relations, Just try and argue about Marx with men who don’t understand him with such notable consistency!
9. **Der Gesellschafts-Spiegel**, Vol.I, p.78. A letter from Westphalia.
10. **Ibid.**, p.86. *Notizen and Nachrichten*, (*Notes and News – Ed.*)
11. See the article by Hess in the same volume of the same review; p.1 *et seq.* See also **Neue Anekdoten, herausgegeben von Karl Grün**, Darmstadt 1845, p. 220. In Germany, as opposed to France, it is the educated minority which engages in the struggle with capitalism and “*ensures victory over it.*”
12. There were many N. —ons in Germany at that time, and of the most varying tendencies. The most remarkable, perhaps, were the *conservatives*. Thus for example, Dr. Karl Vollgraf, *ordentlicher Professor der Rechte*, in a pamphlet bearing an extremely long title (**Von der über und unter ihr naturnothwendiges Mass erweiterten und herabgedruckten Concurrenz in allen Nahrungs- und Erwerbszweigen des bürgerlichen Lebens, als der nächsten Ursache des allgemeinen, alle Klassen mehr oder weniger drückenden Nothstandes in Deutschland, insonderheit des Getreidewuchers, sowie von den Mitteln zu ihrer Abstellung**, Darmstadt 1848) (**On the Competition**

Extended Over and Depressed Below Its Natural Level in All Branches of Trade and Industry in Civil Life, as the Immediate Cause of the Depression Affecting More or Less All Classes in Germany, Particularly of the Usurious Trade in Corn; and on the Measures for Ending the Same – Ed.) represented the economic situation of the “German Fatherland” amazingly like the way the Russian economic situation is represented in the book **Sketches of Our Social Economy since the Reform**. [29*] Vollgraf also presented matters as though the development of productive forces had *already* led, “under the influence of free competition,” to the relative diminution of the number of workers engaged in industry. He described in greater detail than Buhl the influence of unemployment on the state of the internal market. Producers in one branch of industry are at the same time consumers for products of other branches, but an unemployment deprives the producers of purchasing power, demand diminishes, in consequence of it unemployment becomes general and there arises complete pauperism (*völliger Pauperismus*). “*And as the peasantry is also ruined owing to excessive competition, a complete stagnation of business arises. The social organism decomposes, its physiological processes lead to the appearance of a savage mass, and hunger produces in this mass a ferment against which public penalties and even arms are impotent.*” Free competition leads in the villages to reduction of peasant holdings to tiny dimensions. *In no peasant household do the working hands find sufficient employment all the year round.* “Thus in thousands of villages, particularly those in areas of poor fertility, almost exactly as in Ireland, the poor peasants stand without work or employment before the doors of their houses. None of them can help one another, for they all have too little, all need wages, all seek work and do not find it.” Vollgraf for his part invented a number of “measures” for combating the destructive operation of “free competition,” though not in the spirit of the socialist journal **Der Gesellschafts-Spiegel**.

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Editorial Notes

1*. Engels characterizes Karl Heinzen as follows: “Herr Heinzen is a former liberal small official who as early as 1844 dreamed of progress within the framework of the law and of a paltry German constitution.” (K. Marx and F. Engels, **Gesamtausgabe**, Section 1, Vol.6, pp.282-98.)

2*. Here Plekhanov has in mind articles by Marx and Engels against Heinzen published in 1847 in the **Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung**. The paper carried two articles by Engels: *The Communists and Karl Heinzen*, and one by Marx: *Moralizing Critique and Critical Morals*.

3*. The words of Engels quoted are in the following text: “Herr Heinzen imagines, of course, that one can arbitrarily change and adapt the property relations, the law of inheritance, and so

on. Herr Heinzen, one of the most ignorant people of this century, may, of course, not know that the property relations of each epoch are the necessary results of the mode of production and exchange of that epoch.” (K. Marx and F. Engels, **Gesamtausgabe**, Section 1, Vol.6, pp.298-328.)

4*. The liberal Narodniks accused the Marxists of being glad of the capitalization of the countryside, of welcoming the painful separation of the peasants from their lands and of being ready to promote this process by all means at their disposal, hand in hand with the country kulaks and plunderers, the heroes of “primitive accumulation,” the Kolupayevs and Razuvayevs depicted in Saltykov-Shchedrin’s satirical work **The Refuge of Mon Repos**.

5*. *Molchalinism*—from Molchalin (see Note 252), synonymous of servility and adaptability.

6*. Plekhanov here refers to the preface of V.V. (V.P. Vorontsov) to the collection of his articles **Destinies of Capitalism in Russia**, published in 1882. In that preface Vorontsov gives as the reason for reprinting his articles the fact that he wishes “to stir our learned and sworn publicists of capitalism and Narodism to study the laws of Russia’s economic development, the basis of all other phenomena in the life of the country. Without knowledge of this law, systematic and successful social activity is impossible.” (p.1.)

7*. *Krivenko, Sergei Nikolayevich* (1847-1907) – liberal Narodnik, publicist. He was one of the first Narodniks to come out against Marxism in the legal press.

8*. *Struve, Pyotr Bernhardovich* (1870-1944), prominent exponent of “Legal Marxism” – a liberal-bourgeois trend that appeared in the 90s and was, in fact, a distortion of Marxism. Struve finished up as a monarchist and white-guard emigré.

“*Legal Marxists*” – they were called “Legal Marxists” because they published their articles in legal periodicals, i.e., periodicals licensed by the tsarist government—had their own methods of fighting against the Narodniks, seeking to subjugate the working-class movement to the interest of the bourgeoisie. At one time Marxists entered into an alliance with “Legal Marxists” in combating the Narodniks.

9*. Quotation from S.N. Krivenko’s article *In Connection with Cultural Recluses* (**Russkoye Bogatstvo**, December 1893, Section II, p.189).

10*. In 1884 Engels sent V.I. Zasulich a copy of Marx’s letter. (The latter had not been dispatched by Marx.) “I enclose Marx’s manuscript (copy),” he wrote to her on March 6, “which you may make use of as you judge necessary. I don’t know whether it was in **Slovo** or in **Otechestvenniye Zapiski** that he found the article *Karl Marx before the Judgement of Mr. Y. Zhukovsky*. He wrote this answer, apparently intended for publication in Russia, but he did not send it to St. Petersburg for fear of his name alone imperilling the existence of the paper in which his answer would be published.”

(**Correspondence of K. Marx and F. Engels with Russian Political Figures**, Russ. ed., 1951, p.306.)

11*. This and a number of the following quotations are from Marx’s letter to the editorial board

of **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**.

12*. On the substance of the question Marx's thought comes to this: the village community "may be the starting point of the communist development" if "the Russian revolution serves as a signal for the proletarian revolution in the West." Marx and Engels also expressed this thought in 1882 in the Preface to the first Russian edition of the **Manifesto of the Communist Party**. Still earlier Engels expressed the same thought in his article *Soziales aus Russland* printed in 1875 in **Volksstaat** in reply to P.N. Tkachov's *Open Letter*. (Cf. F. Engels, *On Social Relations in Russia*, in K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Works**, Vol.II, Moscow, 1958, pp.51-58.) By the nineties, however, it was already clear to Engels that the village community in Russia was rapidly disintegrating under the pressure of developing capitalism. He mentioned this in a number of his works of that time: *The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism* (1890), *Socialism in Germany* (1891), *Can Europe Disarm?* (1893), and others. Finally, in 1894, in his *Afterword to Reply to P.N. Tkachov*, he wrote: "Has this village community still survived to such an extent that at the required moment, as Marx and I still hoped in 1882, it could, combined with a revolution in Western Europe, become the starting point of communist development—of this I will not undertake to judge. But of one thing there is no doubt; for anything at all of this community to survive, first of all tsarist despotism must be overthrown, there must be a revolution in Russia." (K. Marx and F. Engels, **Correspondence with Russian Political Figures**, Russ. ed., 1951, p.297.)

13*. K. Marx, **The Poverty of Philosophy**.

14*. Chernyshevsky developed his view on the concreteness of truth in **Sketches of the Gogol Period in Russian Literature**. (N.G. Chernyshevsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.III, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1947.)

15*. Marx says this in his letter to the editorial board of **Otechestvenniye Zapiski**. (Cf. K. Marx and F. Engels, **Correspondence with Russian Political Figures**, Russ. ed., 1951, p.221.)

16*. Plekhanov does not quote the exact words of K. Marx. Below we give the French original and the exact translation of this passage:

“Si la Russie tend à devenir une nation capitaliste, à l’instar des nations de l’Europe occidentale – et pendant les dernières années elle s’est donnée beaucoup de mal dans ce sens – elle n’y réussira pas sans avoir préalablement transformé une bonne partie de ses paysans en prolétaires; et après cela, une fois amenée au giron du régime capitaliste, elle en subira les lois impitoyables, comme d’autres peuples profanes. Voilà tout.” Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, **Ausgewählte Briefe**, Berlin 1953.

“If Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation after the example of West European countries—and during the last few years she has been taking a lot of trouble in this direction—she will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once taken to the bosom of the capitalist regime, she will experience its pitiless laws like other profane peoples. That is all.” K. Marx and F. Engels, **Selected Correspondence**,

Moscow 1955, p. 379.)

17*. One of the most popular Russian proverbs: “The nightingale is not fed on fables” – “fine words butter no parsnips.”

18*. Plekhanov wanted to make the following addition to this passage: “Here I have in mind the activity of the Social-Democrats. It has promoted the development of capitalism by removing antiquated modes of production, for instance home industry. The attitude of Social-Democracy in the West to capitalism is briefly defined by the following words of Bebel at the Breslau Congress of the Party (1895): ‘I always ask myself whether a given step will not harm the development of capitalism. If it will, I am *against* it ...’” (**The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll. IV, p. 229.)

19*. *Suzdal* – from Suzdal locality in Russia where icon painting was widespread. Icon prints produced in suzdal in great quantities were cheap and unartistic. Hence the adjective Suzdal has come to denote something that is cheap and unartistic.

20*. In G. Uspensky’s tale *Nothing*, from his series **Living Figures**, a peasant who pays “for nothing,” i.e., pays tax on land he does not cultivate, is quite convinced that to pay “for nothing” is far better than to cultivate his allotment.

21*. P.Y. Chaadayev said this in his first *Philosophical Letter*. (P.Y. Chaadayev, **Philosophical Letters**, Russ. ed., Moscow 1906, p.11.) – *Chaadayev, Pyotr Yakovlevich* (1794-1856) – Russian idealist philosopher. He became known in 1836 when he published his **Philosophical Letter** – a sharp criticism of the backward and stagnant system of serfdom in Russia. He hoped that the West, in particular Catholicism, would help to destroy serfdom and ensure progress.

22*. *Yuzhakov, Sergei Nikolayevich* (1849-1910) – publicist, ideologist of Liberal Narodism.

23*. From Nekrasov’s poem *Meditations at the Main Entrance*.

24*. In Tolstoi’s **War and Peace**.

25*. **Moskovskiye Vedomosti** – a reactionary and monarchist newspaper published in Moscow from 1756 to 1918 (except the years from 1779 to 1789 when it was produced by N.I. Novikov, a progressive publisher).

26*. Plekhanov intended to give the following explanation of these words: “i.e., I mean *socialist*.” (**The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll.IV, p.230.)

27*. Friedrich List, a German economist, and ideologist of the German industrial bourgeoisie when capitalism was still weak in Germany, put special emphasis on the development of the productive forces of the separate national economies. For this he considered it necessary to have the co-operation of the state (e.g. protective tariffs on industrial goods).

28*. Plekhanov has the following remarks on this passage: “Concerning N. —on. What was his

principal mistake? He had a poor understanding of ‘the law of value.’ He considered it *statically*, not *dynamically* ... What Engels said on the possibility of error in Struve and N. —on.” (**The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll.IV, pp.230-31.)

On February 26, 1895, Engels wrote to Plekhanov: “As for Danielson (N. —on), I’m afraid nothing can be done with him ... It is absolutely impossible to argue with the generation of Russians which he belongs to and which still believe in the elemental communist mission which is alleged to distinguish Russia, the truly *holy Russia*, from other, non-believing peoples.” (K. Marx and F. Engels, **Correspondence with Russian Political Figures**, Russ. ed., 1951, p.341.)

29*. Danielson’s book **Sketches of Our Social Economy Since the Reform** appeared in 1893. It expounded the economic views of the Narodniks.

30*. Plekhanov here refers to S.N. Krivenko’s article **On the Needs of People’s Industry**, the end of which was printed in No.10 of **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, 1894.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Appendix I

Once Again Mr. Mikhailovsky, Once More the “Triad” [\[1*\]](#)

In the October issue of **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, Mr. Mikhailovsky, replying to Mr. P. Struve, again has made some observations on the philosophy of Hegel and on “economic” materialism. [\[2*\]](#)

According to him, the materialist conception of history and economic materialism are not one and the same thing. The economic materialists draw everything from economics.

“Well, but if I seek the root or foundation not only of the legal and political institutions, of the philosophical and other views of society, but also of its economic structure, in the racial or tribal peculiarities of its members, in the proportions of the longitudinal and transverse diameters of their skulls, in the character of their facial angle, in the size and inclination of their jaws, in the size of their thorax, the strength of their muscles, etc.: or, on the other hand, in purely geographical factors – in the island position of England, in the steppe character of part of Asia, in the mountainous character of Switzerland, in the freezing of rivers in the north, etc. – will not this be the materialist conception of history? It is clear that economic materialism, as an historical theory, is only a particular case of the materialist conception of history ...” [\[1\]](#)

Montesquieu was inclined to explain the historical fate of peoples by “purely geographical factors.” To the extent that he consistently upheld these factors, he was undoubtedly a materialist. Modern dialectical materialism does not ignore, as we have seen, the influence of geographical environment on the development of society. It only

ascertains better in what way geographical factors influence “social man.” It shows that the geographical environment provides men with a greater or lesser possibility of developing their productive forces, and thereby pushes them, more or less energetically, along the path of historical progress. Montesquieu argued thus: A certain geographical environment determines certain physical and psychical qualities of men, and these qualities bring in their train this or that structure of society. Dialectical materialism reveals that such an argument is unsatisfactory, and that the influence of geographical environment shows itself first of all, and in the strongest degree, in the character of *social relations*, which in their turn influence the views of men, their customs and even their physical development infinitely more strongly than, for example, climate. Modern geographical science (let us again recall the book of Mechnikov and its foreword by Élisée Reclus) fully agrees in this respect with dialectical materialism. This materialism is, of course, a particular case of the materialist view of history. But it explains it more fully, more universally, than could those other “particular cases.” *Dialectical materialism is the highest development of the materialist conception of history.*

Holbach said that the historical fate of peoples is sometimes determined for a whole century ahead by the motion of an atom which has begun to play tricks in the brain of a powerful man. This was also a materialist view of history. But it was of no avail in explaining historical phenomena. Modern dialectical materialism is incomparably more fruitful in this respect. It is of course a particular case of the materialist view of history but precisely that particular case which alone corresponds to the modern condition of science. The impotence of Holbach’s materialism showed itself in the return of its supporters to idealism: “Opinions govern the world.” Dialectical materialism now drives idealism from its last positions.

Mr. Mikhailovsky imagines that only that man would be a consistent materialist who explains all phenomena with the help of molecular mechanics. Modern dialectical materialism cannot discover the *mechanical* explanation of history. This is, if you like, *its weakness*. But is modern biology able to give a mechanical explanation of the origin and development of species? It is not. That is *its weakness*. [3*] The genius of whom Laplace dreamed would have been, of course, above such weakness. But we simply don’t know when that genius will appear, and we satisfy ourselves with such explanations of phenomena as best correspond to the science of our age. Such is *our* “particular case.”

Dialectical materialism says that it is not the consciousness of men which determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness; that it is not in the philosophy but in the economics of a particular society that one must seek the key to understanding its particular condition. Mr. Mikhailovsky makes several remarks on this subject. One of them reads as follows:

“... The negative halves” (!) “of the basic formula of the materialist sociologists contain a protest or a reaction not against philosophy in general, but evidently against that of Hegel. It is to the latter that belongs ‘the explanation of being from consciousness’ ... The founders of economic materialism are Hegelians and, in that capacity, insist so stubbornly ‘not from philosophy,’ ‘not from consciousness,’ that they cannot, and do not even attempt to, burst out of the circle of Hegelian thought.” [2]

When we read these lines we thought that here our author, like Mr. Kareyev, was groping his way to the “synthesis.” Of course, we said to ourselves, the synthesis of Mr. Mikhailovsky will be a little higher than that of Mr. Kareyev; Mr. Mikhailovsky will not confine himself to repeating that thought of the deacon in G.I. Uspensky’s tale *The Incurable* [4*], that “the spirit is a thing apart” and that, “as matter has various spices for its benefit, so equally has the spirit.” Still, Mr. Mikhailovsky too will not refrain from synthesis. Hegel is the thesis, economic materialism is the antithesis, and the eclecticism of the modern Russian ‘subjectivists is the synthesis. How could one resist the temptation of such a “triad”? And then we began to remember what was the real relationship between the historical theory of Marx and the philosophy of Hegel.

First of all we “noted” that in Hegel historical movement is not at all explained *by the views of men or by their philosophy*. It was *the French materialists of the eighteenth century* who explained history by the views, the “opinions” of men. Hegel ridiculed such an explanation: of course, he said, reason rules in history – but then it also rules the movement of the celestial bodies, and are they conscious of their movement? The historical development of mankind is reasonable in the sense that it is law-governed; but the law-governed nature of historical development does not yet prove at all that its ultimate cause must be sought in the views of men or in their opinions. Quite on the contrary: that conformity to law shows that men make their history unconsciously.

We don’t remember, we continued, what the historical views of Hegel look like according to *Lewes* [5*]; but that we are not distorting them, anyone will agree who has read the famous **Philosophie der Geschichte (Philosophy of History – Ed.)**. Consequently, in affirming that it is not the philosophy of men which determines their social existence, the supporters of “economic” materialism are not controverting Hegel at all, and consequently *in this respect* they represent no antithesis to him. And this means that Mr. Mikhailovsky’s synthesis will not be successful, even should our author not confine himself to repeating the idea of the deacon.

In the opinion of Mr. Mikhailovsky, to affirm that philosophy, i.e., the views of men, does not explain their history, was possible only in Germany in the 40s, when a revolt against the Hegelian system was not yet noticeable. We now see that such an opinion is founded, at best, only on *Lewes*.

But how poorly *Lewes* acquaints Mr. Mikhailovsky with the course of development of philosophical thought in Germany is demonstrated, apart from the foregoing, by the following circumstance. Our author quotes with delight the well-known letter of Belinsky, in which the latter makes his bow to the “philosophical nightcap” of Hegel. [6*] In this letter Belinsky *says*, among other things:

“The fate of a subject, an individual, a personality is more important than the fate of the world and the weal of the Chinese emperor, viz., the Hegelian *Allgemeinheit*” (Universality – *Ed.*).

Mr. Mikhailovsky makes many remarks on *the* subject of this letter, but he does not “*remark*” that Belinsky has dragged in the Hegelian *Allgemeinheit* quite out of place. Mr. Mikhailovsky evidently thinks that the Hegelian *Allgemeinheit* is just the same as the spirit or the absolute idea. But *Allgemeinheit* does not constitute in Hegel even the main distinguishing feature of the absolute idea. *Allgemeinheit* occupies in his work a place no more honourable than, for example, *Besonderheit* or *Einzelheit* (Individuality or Singleness – *Ed.*) and in consequence of this it is incomprehensible why precisely *Allgemeinheit* is called the Chinese Emperor, and deserves – unlike its other sisters – an attentive and mocking bow. This may seem a detail, unworthy of attention at the present time; but it is not so. Hegel’s *Allgemeinheit*, badly understood, still prevents Mr. Mikhailovsky, for example, from understanding the history of German philosophy – prevents him to such an extent that even *Lewes* does not rescue him from misfortune.

In the opinion of Mr. Mikhailovsky, worship of *Allgemeinheit* led Hegel to complete negation of the *rights of the individual*. “There is no system of philosophy,” he says, “which treats the individual with such withering contempt and cold cruelty as the system of Hegel” (p.55). This can be true only according to *Lewes*. Why did Hegel consider the history of the East to be the first, *lowest* stage in the development of mankind? Because in the East the *individual* was not developed, and had not up till then been developed. Why did Hegel speak with enthusiasm of ancient Greece, in the history of which modern man feels himself at last “at home”? Because in Greece individual personality was developed (“beautiful individuality” – “*schöne Individualität*”). Why did Hegel speak with such admiration of Socrates? Why did he, almost first among the historians of philosophy, pay a just tribute even to the *sophists*? Was it really because he despised the individual?

Mr. Mikhailovsky has heard a bell, but where he cannot tell.

Hegel not only did not despise the individual, but created a whole cult of *heroes*, which was inherited in its entirety thereafter, by Bruno Bauer. For Hegel heroes were the instruments of the universal spirit, and in that sense they themselves were *not free*.

Bruno Bauer revolted against the “*spirit*,” and thereby set free his “*heroes*.” For him the heroes of “*critical thought*” were the real demiurges of history, *as opposed to the “mass,”* which, although it does irritate its heroes almost to tears by its slow-wittedness and its sluggishness, still does finish up in the end by marching along the path marked out by the heroes’ self-consciousness. The contrasting of “*heroes*” and “*mass*” (“*mob*”) passed from Bruno Bauer to his Russian illegitimate children, and we now have the pleasure of contemplating it in the articles of Mr. Mikhailovsky. Mr. Mikhailovsky does not remember his philosophical kinship: that is not praiseworthy.

And so we have suddenly received the elements of a new “*synthesis*.” The Hegelian cult of heroes, serving the universal spirit, is the *thesis*. The Bauer cult of heroes of “*critical thought*,” guided only by their “*self-consciousness*,” is the *antithesis*. Finally, the theory of Marx, which reconciles both extremes, eliminating the universal spirit and explaining the origin of the heroes’ self-consciousness by the development of environment, is the *synthesis*.

Our opponents, so partial to “*synthesis*,” must remember that the theory of Marx was not at all the first *direct* reaction against Hegel: that that first reaction – superficial on account of its one-sidedness – was constituted in Germany by the views of Feuerbach and *particularly of Bruno Bauer*, with whom our subjectivists should long ago have acknowledged their kinship.

Not a few other incongruities have also been piled up by Mr. Mikhailovsky about Hegel and about Marx in his article against Mr. P. Struve. Space does not permit as to enumerate them here. We will confine ourselves to offering our readers the following interesting problem.

We know Mr. Mikhailovsky; we know his complete ignorance of Hegel; we know his complete incomprehension of Marx; we know his irresistible striving to discuss Hegel, Marx and their mutual relations; the problem is, how many more mistakes will Mr. Mikhailovsky make thanks to his striving?

But it is hardly likely that anyone will succeed in solving this problem; it is an equation with too many unknowns. There is only one means of replacing *unknown* magnitudes in it by definite magnitudes; it is to read the articles of Mr. Mikhailovsky carefully and *notice his mistakes*. True, that is a far from joyful or easy task: there will be very many mistakes, if only Mr. Mikhailovsky does not get rid of his bad habit of discussing philosophy without consulting beforehand people who know more about it than he does.

We shall not deal here with the attacks made by Mr. Mikhailovsky on Mr. P. Struve. As far as these attacks are concerned, Mr. Mikhailovsky now belongs to the author of

Critical Remarks on the Question of the Economic Development of Russia, and we do not wish to aspire to the property of another. However, Mr. P. Struve will perhaps forgive us if we permit ourselves to make two small “observations.”

Mr. Mikhailovsky is insulted because Mr. P. Struve “struck at him” with a question-mark. He is so insulted that, not confining himself to pointing out faults of style in the language of Mr. Struve, he accuses him of being a “non-Russian,” and even recalls the story of two Germans, one of whom said he had “shotted” a crow, and the other corrected him, saying that grammar required “shotted.” Why did Mr. Struve, however, raise his hand, armed with a question-mark, against Mr. Mikhailovsky? It was because of his words: “The modern, economic order in Europe began to come into existence at a time when the science which manages this sphere of phenomena was not yet in existence, etc.” The question-mark accompanies the word “manages”, Mr. Mikhailovsky says: “In German that may not perhaps sound well” (how biting: “*in German*”!), “but in Russian, I assure you, Mr. Struve, it arouses no question in any one, and requires no question-mark.” The writer of these lines bears a purely Russian name, and possesses just as much of the Russian soul as Mr. Mikhailovsky: the most sarcastic critic will not venture to call him a German: and nevertheless the word “manages” arouses a question in him. He asks himself: if one can say that science *manages* a certain sphere of phenomena, could not one after this promote the technical arts to be *chiefs of particular units*? Could not one say, for example: the art of assaying commands alloys? In our opinion, this would be awkward, it would give the arts *too military an appearance*, in just the same way as the word “*manages*” gives science the appearance of *a bureaucrat*. Consequently, Mr. Mikhailovsky is wrong. Struve failed to react to the question; it is hard to say how he would have corrected Mikhailovsky’s unhappy expression. Let us assume that he would have “shotted” a crow. But it is unfortunately an *accomplished fact* that Mikhailovsky has already “shotted” several crows. And yet he does not seem to be a “non-Russian.”

Mr. Mikhailovsky in his article raised an amusing outcry about the words of Mr. Struve: “No, let us recognize our lack of culture and go into training by capitalism.” [7*] Mr. Mikhailovsky wants to represent affairs as though these words meant: “*let us hand over the producer as a victim to the exploiter.*” It will be easy for Mr. P. Struve to demonstrate the vanity of Mr. Mikhailovsky’s efforts, and it will probably be seen now by anyone who has carefully read the **Critical Remarks**. But Mr. Struve nevertheless did express himself very carelessly, whereby he probably led into temptation many simpletons and rejoiced the heart of some acrobats. *That will teach you a lesson*, we shall say to Mr. Struve, and we shall remind the acrobatic gentry how Belinsky, at the very end of his life, when he had long ago said good-bye to *Allgemeinheit*, expressed the idea in one of his letters that the cultural future of Russia can only be ensured by the

bourgeoisie. [8*] In Belinsky this was also a very clumsy threat. But what was his clumsiness aroused by? *Generous fascination by the West*. It is the same fascination that brought about, we are convinced, the awkwardness of Mr. Struve. It is permissible to make a noise on the subject of that clumsiness only for those who have no reply, for example, to his economic arguments.

Mr. Krivenko too has declared war on Mr. P. Struve. [9*] He has his own cause of offence. He wrongly translated an extract from a German article by Mr. P. Struve, and the latter has exposed him. Mr. Krivenko justifies himself, and tries to show that the translation is almost correct; but his are lame excuses and he still remains guilty of distorting the words of his opponent. But you can't ask too much of Mr. Krivenko, in view of his undoubted resemblance to a certain bird, of whom it has been said:

*Sirin, that heavenly bird,
Its voice in singing is loudly heard;
When the Lord's praise it sings,
To forget its own self it begins.* [10*]

When Mr. Krivenko is shaming the "disciples," to forget his own self he begins. Why can't you let him alone, Mr. Struve?

Appendix II

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Footnotes

1. **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, October 1894, Part II, p.50.

2. **Ibid.**, pp.51-52.

Editorial Notes

1*. This appendix (*Once Again Mr. Mikhailovsky, Once More the "Triad"*) was published in the

very first edition of the book **The Development of the Monist View of History**.

2*. In the review *Literature and Life (On Mr. P. Struve and his **Critical Remarks on the Subject of Russia's Economic Development**)*, **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, 1894, No.10. (N.K. Mikhailovsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.VII, St. Petersburg 1909, pp.885-924.)

3*. Plekhanov's statement is radically at variance with the basic principles of Marxist-Leninist dialectics. Dialectical materialism has never aimed at reducing all natural and social phenomena to mechanics, at giving mechanical explanations of the origin and development of species and of the historic process. Mechanical motion is by no means the only form of motion. "... The motion of matter," Engels says, "is not merely crude mechanical motion, mere change of place, it is heat and light, electric and magnetic tension, chemical combination and dissociation, life and, finally, consciousness." (F. Engels, **Dialectics of Nature**, Moscow 1954, p.51.)

4*. G. Uspensky's tale *The Incurable* is from the series **New Times, New Troubles**.

5*. *Lewes, George Henry* (1817-1878), English bourgeois philosopher, positivist and physiologist.

6*. Quotation from Belinsky's letter to Botkin, March 1, 1841, in which Belinsky broke with the philosophical system of Hegel. See Chapter 4, Note 6*.

7*. Struve's **Critical Remarks on the Subject of Russia's Economic Development** was the object of profound criticism by V. I. Lenin in his **Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book** published in 1894; Lenin exposed the liberal views of Struve and advanced the viewpoint of the revolutionary Marxism. Struve's call "to go into training by capitalism" was defined by Lenin as a purely bourgeois slogan.

8*. In a letter to P.V. Annenkov on February 15 (27), 1848, Belinsky wrote: "When, arguing with you about the bourgeoisie, I called you a conservative, I was a real ass and you were a clever man ... Now it is clear that the internal process of Russia's civil development will not begin before the time when the Russian nobility are transformed into bourgeois." (V.G. Belinsky, **Selected Letters**, Vol.2, Goslitizdat Publishing House, 1955, p.389.)

9*. Krivenko wrote about P. Struve's book **Critical Remarks on the Subject of Russia's Economic Development** which was published in 1894, in the afterword to his article *On the Needs of People's Industry*. (**Russkoye Bogatstvo**, 1894, No.10, pp.126-30.)

10*. *The heavenly bird Sirin* – an image of a mythical heavenly bird with a woman's face and breast used in old Russian manuscripts and legends.

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G.V. Plekhanov

The Development of the Monist View of History

Appendix II

A Few Words to Our Opponents [\[1*\]](#)

The question is again being raised in our literature: what path will the economic development of Russia follow? It is being discussed lengthily and passionately, so passionately that people who are known in common parlance as sensible minds are even perturbed by what would seem the excessive heat of the contending parties. Why, the sensible ones say, get excited and hurl proud challenges and bitter reproaches at your opponents? Why jeer at them? Would it not be better to examine dispassionately a question which is indeed of immense importance to our country, but which, just because of its immense importance, calls for dispassionate examination?

As always, the sensible minds are right and wrong at one and the same time. Why, indeed, such excitement and passion on the part of writers belonging to two different camps each of which – whatever its opponents might say – is striving to the best of its understanding, strength and ability to uphold the most important and most essential interests of the people? Evidently, the question has only to be put to have it answered immediately and once and for all with the help of two or three platitudes which might find a place in any copybook, such as: tolerance is a good thing; respect the opinions of others even if they radically differ from your own, and so on. All this is very true, and it has been “told the world” a very long time now. But it is no less true that human beings were, are, and will be inclined to get passionate wherever the issue affected, affects, or will affect their vital interests. Such is human nature – we might have said, if we did not know how often and how greatly this expression has been abused. Nor is this the whole matter. The chief thing is that we human beings have no reason to regret that such is

our “nature.” No great step in history has ever been taken without the aid of passion, which, multiplying as it does the moral strength and sharpening the intellectual faculties of people, is itself a great force of progress. Only such social questions are discussed dispassionately as are quite unimportant in themselves, or have not yet become *immediate* questions for the given country and the given period, and are therefore of interests only to a handful of arm-chair thinkers. But once a big social question has become an immediate question, it will infallibly arouse strong passions, no matter how earnestly the advocates of moderation may call for calmness.

The question of the economic development of our country is precisely that great social question which we cannot now discuss with moderation for the simple reason that it has become an *immediate question*. This of course does not mean that economics has only now acquired decisive importance in our social development. It has always and everywhere been of such importance. But in our country – as everywhere else – this importance has not always been consciously recognized by people interested in social matters, and their passion was therefore concentrated on questions that had only the most remote relation to economics. Recall, for instance, the 40s in our country. Not so now. Now the great and fundamental importance of economics is realized in our country even by those who passionately revolt against Marx’s “*narrow*” theory of history. Now all thinking people realize that our whole future will be shaped by the way the question of our *economic* development is answered. That indeed is why even thinkers who are anything but “*narrow*” concentrate all their passion on this question. But if we cannot now discuss this question with *moderation*, we can and should see to it even now that there is no *licence* either in the defining of our own thoughts or in our polemical methods. This is a demand to which no objection can possibly be offered. Westerners know very well that earnest passion precludes all licence. In our country, to be sure, it is still sometimes believed that passion and licence are kin sisters, but it is time we too became civilized.

As far as the literary decencies are concerned, it is apparent that we are already civilized to quite a considerable degree – so considerable that our “progressive,” Mr. Mikhailovsky, lectures the Germans (Marx, Engels, Dühring) because in their controversies one may allegedly find “things that are absolutely fruitless, or which distort things and repel by their rudeness.” Mr. Mikhailovsky recalls Börne’s remark that the Germans “have always been rude in controversy”! “And I am afraid,” he adds, “that together with other German influences, this traditional German rudeness has also penetrated into our country, aggravated moreover by our own barbarousness, so that controversy becomes the tirade against Potok-Bogatyr which Count A. Tolstoi puts into the mouth of his princess:

“*You cadger, mumper, ignorant sot!
 Plague on your entrails, may you rot!
 You calf, pig, swine, you Ethiop,
 You devil’s spawn, you dirty snob!
 Were it not that my virginal shame
 Forbids me stronger words to name,
 ’Tis not such oaths, you insolent cad,
 I’d shower down upon your head.*” [1] [2*]

This is not the first time Mr. Mikhailovsky alludes to Tolstoi’s coarse-mouthed princess. He has on many a previous occasion advised Russian writers not to resemble her in their controversies. Excellent advice, there’s no denying. ’Tis only a pity that our author does not always follow it himself. We know, for example, that he called one of his opponents a *louse*, and another a *literary acrobat*. He ornamented his controversy with M. de la Cerda with the following remark: “Of all the European languages, it is only in the Spanish that the word *la cerda* has a definite signification, meaning in Russian pig.” Why the author had to say this, it is hard to imagine.

“Nice, is it not?” M. de la Cerda observed in this connection. Yes, very nice, and quite in the spirit of Tolstoi’s princess. But the princess was blunter, and when she felt like swearing she shouted simply: calf, pig, swine, etc., and did not do violence to foreign languages in order to say a rude word to her opponent.

Comparing Mr. Mikhailovsky with Tolstoi’s princess, we find that he scorns such words as “Ethiop,” “devil’s spawn” and so on, and concentrates, if we may say so, on pachydermic epithets. We find him using -”swine” and “pig,” and pigs moreover of the most different kinds: Hamletized, green, etc. Very forcible this, if rather monotonous. Generally speaking, if we turn from the vituperative vocabulary of Tolstoi’s princess to that of our subjective sociologist, we see that *the living charms bloom in different pattern*, but in power and expressiveness they are in no way inferior to the polemical charms of the lively princess. “*Est modus in rebus* (There is a measure in all things. – *Ed.*) or, as the Russian has it, you must know where to stop,” says Mr. Mikhailovsky. Nothing could be truer, and we heartily regret that our worthy sociologist often forgets it. He might tragically exclaim:

*Video meliora, proboque,
 Deteriora sequor!* [3*]

However, it is to be hoped that in time Mr. Mikhailovsky too will become civilized, that in the end his good intentions will prevail over “our own barbarousness,” and he will cease hurling “swine” and “pig” at his opponents. Mr. Mikhailovsky himself rightly thinks that *la raison finit toujours par avoir raison*. (“Reason always triumphs in the end.” – *Ed.*)

Our reading public no longer approves of virulent controversy. But, in its disapproval, it confuses virulence with rudeness, when- they are very far from being the same. The vast difference between virulence and rudeness was explained by Pushkin:

*Abuse at times, of course, is quite unseemly.
You must not write, say: “This old dodderer’s
A goat in spectacles, a wretched slanderer,
Vicious and vile.” – These are personalities.
But you may write and print, if so you will,
That “this Parnassian Old Believer is
(In his articles) a senseless jabberer,
For ever languorous, for ever tedious,
Ponderous, and even quite a dullard.”
For here there is no person, only an author. [4*]*

If, like Tolstoi’s princess or Mr. Mikhailovsky, – you should think of calling your opponent a “swine” or a “louse,” these “*are personalities*”; but if you should argue that such-and-such a sociological or historical-sophistical or economic Old Believer is, in his articles, “works” or “essays,” “for ever languorous, for ever tedious, ponderous and even” ... dull-witted, well “here there is no person, only an author,” and it will be virulence, not rudeness. Your verdict, of course, may be mistaken, *and* your opponents will be doing well if they disclose your mistake. But they will have the right to accuse you only of a mistake, not of virulence, for without such virulence literature cannot develop. If literature should attempt to get along without virulence, it would at once become, as Belinsky expressed it, *a flattering reiterator of stale platitudes*, which only its enemies can wish it. Mr. Mikhailovsky’s observation regarding the traditional German rudeness and our own barbarousness was provoked by Mr. N. Beltov’s “interesting book,” **The Development of the Monist View of History**. Many have accused Mr. Beltov of unnecessary virulence. For instance, a **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer has written in reference to his book:

“Without sharing the, in our opinion one-sided, theory of economic materialism, we would be prepared in the interest of science and our social life to welcome the exponents of this theory, if some of them (Messrs. Struve and Beltov) did not

introduce far too much virulence into their polemics, if they did not jeer at writers whose works are worthy of respect!" [5*]

This was written in the selfsame **Russkaya Mysl** which only a little while ago was calling the advocates of "economic" materialism "numskulls" and asserting that Mr. P. Struve's book was a product of undigested erudition and a total incapacity for logical thinking. **Russkaya Mysl** does not like excessive virulence and therefore, as the reader sees, spoke of the advocates of economic materialism. in the mildest terms. Now it is prepared, in the interest of science and our social life, to welcome the exponents of this theory. But why? Can much be done for our. social life by numskulls? Can science gain much from undigested erudition and a total incapacity for logical thinking? It seems to us that fear of excessive virulence is leading **Russkaya Mysl** too far and compelling it to say things that might induce the reader to suspect that it itself is incapable of digesting something, and of a certain incapacity for logical thinking.

Mr. P. Struve never resorts to virulence (to say nothing of excessive virulence), and if Mr. Beltov does, it is only to the kind of which Pushkin would probably have said that it refers only to writers and is therefore quite permissible. The **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer maintains that the works of the writers Mr. Beltov derides are worthy of respect. If Mr. Beltov shared this opinion, it would of course be wrong of him to deride them. But what if he is convinced of the contrary? What if the "works" of these gentlemen seem to him tedious and ponderous and quite vacuous, and even pernicious in our day, when social life has become so complicated and demands a new mental effort on the part of those who are not in the habit, to use Gogol's expression, of "picking their noses" as they look on the world. To the **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer these writers may probably seem regular torches of light, beacons of salvation. But what if Mr. Beltov considers them extinguishers and mind-druggers? The reviewer will say that Mr. Beltov is mistaken. That is his right; but he has to prove his opinion, and not content himself with simply condemning "excessive virulence." What is the reviewer's opinion of Grech and Bulgarin? [6*] We are confident that if he were to express it, a certain *section* of our press would consider it excessively virulent. Would that mean that the *Russkaya Mysl* reviewer is not entitled to say frankly what he thinks of the literary activities of Grech and Bulgarin? We do not of course bracket the people with whom Messrs. P. Struve and N. Beltov are disputing in the same category as Grech and Bulgarin. But we would ask the **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer why literary decency permits one to speak virulently of Grech and Bulgarin, but forbids one to do so of Messrs. Mikhailovsky and Kareyev? The reviewer evidently thinks that there is no beast stronger than the cat [7*], and that the cat, therefore, in distinction to other beasts, deserves particularly respectful treatment. But, after all, one has the right to doubt that. We, for instance, think that the subjective cat is not only a beast that is not very strong, but even one that has quite considerably degenerated, and is therefore not deserving of any particular respect. We are prepared

to argue with the reviewer if he does not agree with us, but before entering into argument we would request him to ponder well on the difference which undoubtedly exists between *virulence of judgement* and *rudeness of literary expression*. Messrs. Struve and Beltov have expressed judgements which to very many may seem virulent. But has either of them ever resorted, in defence of his opinions, to such coarse abuse as that which has been resorted to time and again in his literary skirmishes by Mr. Mikhailovsky, that veritable *Miles Gloriosus* (Glorious Warrior – Ed.) of our “progressive” literature? Neither of them has done so, and the **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer would himself give them credit for this if he were to reflect on the difference we have indicated between virulence of judgement and coarseness of expression.

Incidentally, this **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer says:

“Mr. Beltov unceremoniously, to say the least, scatters accusations to the effect that such-and-such a writer talks of Marx without having read his works, condemns the Hegelian philosophy, without having acquainted himself, with it personally, etc. It would be well, of course, if he did not at the same time commit blunders himself, especially on most essential points. Yet precisely about Hegel Mr. Beltov talks the wildest nonsense: ‘If modern natural science,’ we read on p. 86 of the book in question ‘confirms at every step the idea expressed with such genius by Hegel, that quantity passes into quality, can we say that it has nothing in common with Hegelianism?’ But the misfortune is, Mr. Beltov, that Hegel did not affirm this and argued the very opposite: with him, ‘quality passes into quantity.’”

If we were to say what we thought of the reviewer’s notion of Hegel’s philosophy, our judgement would probably seem to him “excessively virulent”. But the blame would not be ours. We can assure the reviewer that very virulent judgements of his philosophical knowledge were passed by all who read his review and have any acquaintance at all with the history of philosophy.

One cannot, of course, insist that every reviewer must have a thorough philosophical education, but one can insist that he does not take the liberty of arguing about matters of which he has no knowledge. Otherwise, very “virulent” things will be said of him by people who are acquainted with the subject.

In Part I of his **Encyclopaedia**, in an addendum to Section 108, on *Measure*, Hegel says:

“To the extent that quality and quantity are still differentiated and are not altogether identical, these two definitions are to some degree independent of each other, so that, on the one hand, the quantity may change without the quality of the object changing, but, on the other, its increase or decrease, to which the object is at first indifferent, has a limit beyond which the quality changes. Thus, for example, alterations in the temperature of water at first do not affect its liquid state, but if the temperature is further if increased or decreased, there comes a point when this state of cohesion undergoes a qualitative change and the water is transformed into

steam or into ice. It seems at first that the quantitative change has no effect whatever on the essential nature of the object, but there is something else behind it, and this apparently simple change of quantity has the effect of changing the quality.” [8*]

“The misfortune is, Mr. Beltov, that Hegel did not affirm this and argued the very opposite!” Do you still think that this is the misfortune, Mr. Reviewer? [2] Or perhaps you have now changed your opinion on this matter? And if you have, what is really the misfortune? We could tell you if we were not afraid that you would accuse us of excessive virulence.

We repeat that one cannot insist that every reviewer must be acquainted with the history of philosophy. The misfortune of the **Russkaya Mysl** reviewer is therefore not as great as might appear at the first glance. But “*the misfortune is*” that this *misfortune* is not the reviewer’s last. There is a second which is the main and worse than the first: he did not take the trouble to read the book he was reviewing.

On pp. 75-76 of his book Mr. Beltov gives a rather long excerpt from Hegel’s Greater Logic – **Wissenschaft der Logik (The Science of Logic** – Ed.). Here is the beginning of the excerpt:

“Changes in being consist not only in the fact that one quantity passes into another quantity, but also that quality passes into quantity, and vice versa, etc.” (p.75).

If the reviewer had at least read this excerpt he would not have fallen into misfortune, because then he would not have “affirmed” that “Hegel did not affirm this and argued the very opposite.”

We know how the majority of reviews are written in Russia – and not only Russia, unfortunately. The reviewer runs through the book, rapidly scanning, say, every tenth or twentieth page and marking the passages which seem to him most characteristic. He then writes out these passages and accompanies them with expressions of censure or approval: he “is perplexed,” he “very much regrets,” or he “heartily welcomes” – and, hey presto! the review is ready. One can imagine how much nonsense is printed as a result, especially if (as not infrequently happens) the reviewer has no knowledge whatever of the subject discussed in the book he is examining!

It would not enter our heads to recommend reviewers to rid themselves of this bad habit *completely*: only the grave can cure the hunchback. All the same, they ought at least to take their business a little more seriously when – as in the dispute on Russia’s economic development, for example – the vital interests of our country are concerned. Do they really propose to go on misleading the reading public on this subject, too, with their frivolous reviews? After all – as Mr. Mikhailovsky rightly says – one must know

when to stop.

Mr. Mikhailovsky is likewise displeased with Mr. Beltov's polemical methods. "Mr. Beltov," he says, "is a man of talent and is not devoid of wit, but with him unfortunately it often passes into unpleasant buffoonery." [9*] Why buffoonery? And to whom, indeed, is Mr. Beltov's alleged buffoonery unpleasant?

When, in the 60s, **Sovremennik** scoffed at Pogodin, say, it probably seemed to Pogodin that the journal was guilty of unpleasant buffoonery. And it seemed so not only to Pogodin alone, but to all who were accustomed to respect the Moscow historian. Was there any lack of attacks in those days on "the knights of the whistle"? [10*] Was there any lack of people who were outraged by the "schoolboyish pranks of the whistlers"? Well, in our opinion, the brilliant wit of the "whistlers" never passed into unpleasant buffoonery; and if the people they scoffed at thought otherwise, it was only because of that human weakness which led Ammos Fyodorovich Lyapkin-Tyapkin [11*] to consider "*far too long*" the letter in which he was described as "very much of a boor."

"So that's it! You mean to suggest that Mr. Beltov possesses the wit of Dobrolyubov [12*] and his fellow-contributors to *The Whistle*? Well, that's the limit!" – will exclaim those who find Mr. Beltov's polemical methods "not nice."

But wait a moment, sirs! We are not comparing Mr. Beltov with the "whistlers" of the 60s; we are only saying that it is not for Mr. Mikhailovsky to judge whether, and where exactly, Mr. Beltov's wit passes into unpleasant buffoonery. Who can be a judge in his own case?

But Mr. Mikhailovsky not only accuses Mr. Beltov of "unpleasant buffoonery." He levels a very serious charge against him. To make it easier for the reader to understand what it is all about, we shall allow Mr. Mikhailovsky to formulate his charge in his own words:

"In one of my articles in **Russkaya Mysl** I recalled my acquaintance with the late N.I. Sieber and incidentally said that when discussing the future of capitalism that worthy savant 'used all possible arguments, but at the least danger hid behind the authority of the immutable and unquestionable tripartite dialectical development.' Citing these words of mine, Mr. Beltov writes: 'We had more than once to converse with the deceased, and never did we hear from him references to dialectical development; he himself said more than once that he was quite ignorant of the significance of Hegel in the development, of modern economics. Of course, everything can be blamed on the dead, and therefore Mr. Mikhailovsky's evidence is irrefutable!' I would put it differently: everything cannot always be blamed on the dead, and Mr. Beltov's evidence is fully refutable ...

"In 1879 an article of Sieber's was printed in the magazine **Slovo** entitled: *The Application of Dialectics to Science*. [13*] This (unfinished) article was a paraphrase, even almost entirely a translation, of Engels's **Herrn Dühring's**

Umwälzung der Wissenschaft. [14*] Well, to remain, after having translated this book, ‘quite ignorant of the significance of Hegel in the development of modern economies’ would have been fairly difficult not only for Sieber but even for Potok-Bogatyr in the princess’s polemical description quoted above. This, I think, must be clear to Mr. Beltov himself. In any case, I shall quote a few words from Sieber’s brief foreword: ‘Engels’s book deserves particular attention both because of the consistency and aptness of the philosophical and socio-economic concepts it expounds, and because, in order to explain the practical application of the method of dialectical contradictions, it gives several new illustrations and factual examples which in no little degree facilitate a close acquaintance with this so strongly praised and at the same time so strongly deprecated method of investigating the truth. One might probably say that this is the first time in the existence of what is called dialectics that it is presented to the eyes of the reader in so realistic a light.’

“Hence Sieber was acquainted with the significance of Hegel in the development of modern economics; he was greatly interested in the method of dialectical contradictions. Such is the truth, documentarily certified, and it fully decides the piquant question of who is lying for two.” [3]

The truth, especially when documentarily certified, is an excellent thing! Also in the interest of truth we shall carry on just a little further the quotation given by Mr. Mikhailovsky from Sieber’s article, *The Application of Dialectics to Science*.

Right after the words that conclude the passage Mr. Mikhailovsky quoted, Sieber makes the following remark:

“However, we for our part shall refrain from passing judgement as to the worth of this method in application to the various branches of science, and also as to whether it represents or does not represent – to the extent that actual significance may be attached to it – a mere variation or even prototype of the method of the theory of evolution or universal development. It is precisely in this latter sense that the author regards it; or, at least, he endeavours to indicate a confirmation of it with the help of the truths obtained by the theory of evolution – and it must be confessed that in a certain respect quite a considerable resemblance is here revealed.”

We thus see that the late Russian economist, even after having translated Engels’s **Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science**, still remained in ignorance of the significance of Hegel in the development of modern economics, and even, generally, whether dialectics could be suitably applied to the various branches of science. At all events, he was unwilling to pass judgement on it. And so we ask: is it likely that this selfsame Sieber, who did not venture to judge of the suitability of dialectics generally, yet in his disputes with Mr. Mikhailovsky “at the least danger hid behind the authority of the immutable and unquestionable dialectical development”? Why was it only in these cases that Sieber changed his usually irresolute opinion of dialectics? Was it because he stood in too great a “danger” of being demolished by his terrible opponent? Scarcely! Sieber, with his very weighty fund of knowledge, was the last person to whom

such an opponent could have been “dangerous.”

Yes, indeed, an excellent thing is truth documentarily certified! Mr. Mikhailovsky is absolutely right when he says that it fully decides the piquant question of who is lying for two!

But if the “Russian soul,” having incarnated itself in the person of a certain individual, undoubtedly resorts to distorting the truth, it is not content with distorting it for two only once; for the late Sieber alone it distorts it *twice*: once when it asserts that Sieber hid behind the authority of the triad, and again when, with astonishing presumption, it cites the very statement that proves up to the hilt that Mr. Beltov is right.

Fie, fie, Mr. Mikhailovsky!

“It would be difficult to remain in ignorance of the significance of Hegel in the development of modern economics after having translated Engels’s **Dühring’s Revolution**,” Mr. Mikhailovsky exclaims. Is it really so difficult? Not at all, in our opinion. It would really have been difficult for Sieber, having translated the said book, to remain in ignorance of *Engels’s* (and, of course, Marx’s) *opinion of the significance of Hegel in the development of the said science*. Of that opinion, Sieber was not ignorant, as is self-evident and as follows from his foreword. But Sieber might not be content with the *opinion of others*. As a serious scientist who does not rely on the opinion of others but is accustomed to studying a subject first-hand, he, though he knew Engels’s opinion of Hegel, did not consider himself for all that entitled to say: “I am acquainted with Hegel and his role in the history of development of scientific concepts.” This modesty of a scientist may perhaps be incomprehensible to Mr. Mikhailovsky; he himself tells us that he “does not claim” to be acquainted with Hegel’s philosophy, yet he has the presumption to discuss it very freely. But *quod licet bovi, non licet Jovi*. Having all his life been nothing but a smart journalist, Mr. Mikhailovsky possesses the presumption natural to members of this calling. But he has forgotten the difference between him and men of science. Thanks to this forgetfulness, he ventured to say things that make it quite clear that the “soul” is certainly “lying for two.”

Fie, fie, Mr. Mikhailovsky)

But is it only for two that the worthy “soul” is distorting the truth? The reader will perhaps remember the incident of Mr. Mikhailovsky’s “omission” of the “moment of flowering.” The omission of this “flowering” is of “vast significance”; it shows that he has distorted the truth also for Engels. Why has not Mr. Mikhailovsky said a single word about this instructive episode?

Fie, fie, Mr. Mikhailovsky!

But do you know what? Perhaps the “Russian soul” is not distorting the truth; perhaps, poor thing, it is telling the sheerest truth. Its veracity will be above all suspicion if we only assume that Sieber was just playing a joke on the young writer, was trying to frighten him with the “*triad*.” Indeed, that looks like the truth: Mr. Mikhailovsky assures us that Sieber was familiar with the dialectical method; being familiar with this method, Sieber must have known very well that the celebrated triad never did play the role of an argument with Hegel. On the other hand, Mr. Mikhailovsky, not being familiar with Hegel, might in conversation with Sieber have expressed the thought – which later he expressed time and again – that the whole argumentation of Hegel and the Hegelians consisted in invoking the triad. This must have been amusing to Sieber, so he began calling in the triad to tease the excitable but ill-informed young man. Of course, if Sieber had foreseen into what a deplorable position his interlocutor would in time land as a result of his joke, he certainly would have refrained from it. But this he could not foresee, and so he allowed himself to joke at Mr. Mikhailovsky’s expense. The tatter’s veracity is beyond all doubt if our assumption is correct. Let Mr. Mikhailovsky dig down into his memory: perhaps he will recall some circumstance which shows that our assumption is not altogether unfounded. We, for our part, would be heartily glad to hear of some such circumstance that would save the honour of the “Russian soul.” Mr. Beltov would be glad too, of course.

Mr. Mikhailovsky is a very amusing fellow. He is much annoyed with Mr. Beltov for having said that in the “discoveries” of our subjective sociologist the “Russian mind and Russian soul repeats old stuff and lies for two.” Mr. Mikhailovsky believes that, while Mr. Beltov is not responsible for the substance of the quotation, he may nevertheless be held responsible for choosing it. Only the rudeness of our polemical manners compels our worthy sociologist to admit that to level this rebuke at Mr. Beltov would be too much of a subtlety. But where did Mr. Beltov borrow this “quotation”? He borrowed it from Pushkin. Eugene Onegin was of the opinion that in all our journalism the Russian mind and Russian soul repeats old stuff and lies for two. Can Pushkin be held responsible for his hero’s virulent opinion? Till now, as we know, nobody has ever thought – although it is very likely – that Onegin was expressing the opinion of the great poet himself. But now Mr. Mikhailovsky would like to hold Mr. Beltov responsible for not finding anything in his, Mr. Mikhailovsky’s, writings save a repetition of old stuff and “lying for two.” Why so? Why must this “quotation” not be applied to the “works” of our sociologist? Probably because these works, in the eyes of this sociologist, deserve far more respectful treatment. But, in Mr. Mikhailovsky’s own words, “this is debatable.”

“The fact is,” says Mr. Mikhailovsky, “that in this passage Mr. Beltov has not convicted me of any lies; he just blethered, to make it sound hotter, and used the quotation as a fig leaf” (p.140). Why “blethered,” and not “expressed his firm conviction”? What is the meaning of the sentence: Mr. Mikhailovsky in his articles repeats old stuff and lies for two? It means that Mr. Mikhailovsky is only pronouncing old opinions that have long been refuted in the West, and in doing so, *adds to the errors of Westerners his own, homegrown errors*. Is it really absolutely necessary to use “a fig leaf” when expressing such an opinion of Mr. Mikhailovsky’s literary activities? Mr. Mikhailovsky is convinced that such an opinion can only be “blether,” and not the fruit of a serious and thoughtful evaluation. But – again to use his own words – this is debatable.

The writer of these lines declares quite calmly and deliberately, and without feeling the need for any fig leaf, that in his conviction *a not very high opinion of Mr. Mikhailovsky’s “works” is the beginning of all wisdom*.

But if, when speaking of the “Russian soul,” Mr. Beltov did not convict Mr. Mikhailovsky of any lie, why did our “sociologist” pick precisely on this “quotation” to start the luckless conflict over Sieber? Probably in order to make it sound “hotter.” In reality, there is nothing hot at all about methods like these, but there are people to whom they seem very hot indeed. In one of G.I. Uspensky’s sketches an official’s wife is quarrelling with a janitor. The janitor happens to use the word *podlye* [near]. “What,” cries the official’s wife, “I’m *podlaya* [vile], am I? I’ll show you! I have a son serving in Poland,” etc., etc. Like the official’s wife, Mr. Mikhailovsky pounces upon an individual word, and heatedly cries: “I’m lying for two, am I? You dare to doubt my veracity? Well, now I’ll convict you of lying for many. Just look what you said about Sieber!” We look at what Mr. Beltov said about Sieber, and find that he spoke the honest truth. *Die Moral von der Geschichte* (The moral of the story – *Ed.*) is that excessive heat can lead to no good either for officials’ wives or for Mr. Mikhailovsky.

“Mr. Beltov undertook to prove that the final triumph of materialist monism was established by the so-called theory of economic materialism in history, which theory is held to stand in the closest connection with ‘general philosophical materialism.’ With this end in view, Mr. Beltov made an excursion into the history of philosophy. How desultory and incomplete this excursion is may be judged even from the titles of the chapters devoted to it: *French Materialism of the Eighteenth Century, French Historians of the Restoration, Utopians, Idealist German Philosophy, Modern Materialism*” (p.146).

Again Mr. Mikhailovsky gets heated without any need, and again his heatedness leads him to no good. If Mr. Beltov had been writing even a brief sketch of the *history of philosophy*, an excursion in which he passed from French materialism of the eighteenth century to the French historians of the Restoration, from these historians to the

Utopians, from the Utopians to the German idealists, etc., would indeed be desultory and incomprehensible. But the whole point is that it was not a history of philosophy that Mr. Beltov. was writing. On the very first page of his book he said that he intended to give a brief sketch of the theory that is wrongly called *economic* materialism. He found some faint rudiments of this theory among the French materialists and showed that these rudiments were considerably developed by the French historical specialists of the Restoration; then he turned to men who were not historians by speciality, but who nevertheless had to give much thought to cardinal problems of man's historical development, that is, the Utopians and the German philosophers. He did not by a long way enumerate all the eighteenth-century materialists, Restoration historians, Utopians, or dialectical idealists. But he mentioned the chief of them, those who had contributed more than others to the question that interested him. He showed that all these richly endowed and highly informed men got themselves entangled in contradictions from which the only logical way out was Marx's theory of history. In a word, *il prenait son bien où il le trouvait* (he took his goods wherever he found them – *Ed.*). What objection can be raised to this method? And why doesn't Mr. Mikhailovsky like it?

If Mr. Mikhailovsky has not only *read* Engels's **Ludwig Feurbach and Dühring's Revolution in Science**, but also-which is more important – understood them, he knows for himself what importance the views of the French materialists of the last century, the French historians of the Restoration, the Utopians and the dialectical idealists had in the development of the ideas of Marx and Engels. Mr. Beltov underscored this importance by giving a brief description of what in this respect was most essential in the views of the first, the second, the third, and the fourth. Mr. Mikhailovsky contemptuously shrugs his shoulders at this description; he does not like Mr. Beltov's plan. To which we rejoin that every plan is a good plan if it helps its author to attain his end. And that Mr. Beltov's end was attained, is not, as far as we know, denied even by his opponents.

Mr. Mikhailovsky continues:

“Mr. Beltov speaks both of the French historians and the French ‘Utopians,’ and measures both by the extent of their understanding or non-understanding of economics as the foundation of the social edifice. But strangely enough, he makes no mention whatever of Louis Blanc, although the introduction to the **Histoire de dix ans (History of Ten Years – Ed.)** [15*] is in itself enough to give him a place of honour in the ranks of the first teachers of so-called economic materialism. In it, of course, there is much with which Mr. Beltov cannot agree, but in it there is the struggle of classes, and a description of their economic earmarks, and' economics as the hidden main-spring of politics, and much, generally, that was *later* incorporated into the doctrine which Mr. Beltov defends so ardently. I mention this omission because, firstly, it is astonishing in itself and

hints at certain parallel aims which have nothing in common with impartiality”
(p.150).

Mr. Beltov spoke of Marx’s *predecessors*, Louis Blanc was rather his *contemporary*. To be sure, the **Histoire de dix ans** appeared at a time when Marx’s historical views had not yet finally evolved. But the book could not have had any decisive influence upon them, if only for the reason that Louis Blanc’s views regarding the inner springs of social development contained absolutely nothing new compared, say, with the views of Augustin Thierry or Guizot. It is quite true that “in it there is the struggle of classes, and a description of their economic earmarks, and economics,” etc. But all this was already in Thierry and Guizot and Mignet, as Mr. Beltov irrefutably showed. Guizot, who viewed things from the angle of the struggle of classes, sympathized with the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy, but was very hostile to the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie, which had just begun in his time. Louis Blanc *did sympathize* with this struggle. [4] [In this he differed from Guizot. But the difference was not of an essential nature. It contributed nothing new to Louis Blanc’s *view* of “economics as the hidden mainspring of politics.”] [5]

Louis Blanc, like Guizot, would have said that political constitutions are rooted in the social being of a nation, and that social being is determined in the final analysis by property relations; but where, these property relations spring from was as little known to Louis Blanc as to Guizot. That is why, despite his “economics,” Louis Blanc, like Guizot, was compelled to revert to *idealism*. That he was an idealist in his views of ‘philosophy and history is known to everyone, even if he has not attended a seminary. [6]

At the time the **Histoire de dix ans** appeared, the immediate problem of social science was the problem, solved “*later*” by Marx, *where property relations spring from*. On this question Louis Blanc had nothing new to say. It is natural to assume that it is precisely for this reason that Mr. Beltov said nothing about Louis Blanc. But Mr. Mikhailovsky prefers to make insinuations about parallel aims. *Chacun à son goût!* (Each has his own taste! – *Ed.*)

In the opinion of Mr. Mikhailovsky, Mr. Beltov’s excursion into the history of philosophy “is even weaker than might have been thought from these (above-enumerated) chapter heads.” Why so? Why, because Mr. Beltov said that

“Hegel called metaphysical the point of view of those thinkers – irrespective of whether they were idealists or materialists – who, not being able to understand the process of development of phenomena, willy-nilly represent them to themselves and others as petrified, disconnected, incapable of passing one into another. To this point of view he opposed *dialectics*, which studies phenomena precisely in their development and consequently, in their mutual connection.”

To this, Mr. Mikhailovsky slyly observes:

“Mr. Beltov considers himself an expert in the philosophy of Hegel. I should be glad to learn from him, as from any well-informed person, and for a beginning I would request Mr. Beltov to name the place in Hegel’s works from which he took this supposedly Hegelian definition of the ‘metaphysical point of view.’ I make bold to affirm that he will not be able to name it. To Hegel, metaphysics was the doctrine of the absolute essence of things, lying beyond the limits of experience and observation, of the innermost substratum of phenomena ... Mr. Beltov borrowed his supposedly Hegelian definition not from Hegel but from Engels (all in the same polemical work against Dühring), who quite arbitrarily divided metaphysics from dialectics by the earmark of immobility or fluidity” (p. 147).

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Footnotes

1. **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, Vol. I, 1895, article: *Literature and Life*.

2. The reviewer continues to adhere to his opinion in the third issue of **Russkaya Mysl**, and advises those who do not agree with him to consult “at least” the Russian translation of Überweg-Heintze’s **History of Modern Philosophy**. But why should not the reviewer consult “at least” Hegel himself?

3. **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, January 1895, Part II, pp.140-41.

4. But in his own peculiar manner, which accounted for the wretched role he played in 1848. A veritable gulf lies between the class struggle as it was “*later*” understood by Marx and the class struggle as Louis Blanc conceived it. Anyone who does not notice this gulf is like the sage who failed to notice the elephant in the menagerie. **[16*]**

5. [*Footnote to the 1905 edition*]

6. As an idealist of the lowest grade (i.e., non-dialectical), Louis Blanc naturally had his “*formula of progress*,” which, for all its “*theoretical insignificance*,” was at least no worse than Mr. Mikhailovsky’s “*formula of progress*.”

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Editorial Notes

1*. This appendix is a reply to Mikhailovsky's article *Literature and Life* (***The Development of the Monist View of History*** by N. Beltov) printed in No.1 of **Russkoye Bogatstvo**, 1895. (Cf. N. K. Mikhailovsky, **Collected Works**, Vol.VIII, St. Petersburg 1914, pp.17-36.)

The article *A Few Words to Our Opponents* was first published in 1895 under the signature of Utis in the Marxist symposium **Material for a Characterization of Our Economic Development** (pp.225-59) which was burned by the censorship. The hundred copies which were preserved became bibliographical rarities and the article was made accessible to the public only ten years later, when it was included as an appendix in the second edition of the book **The Development of the Monist View of History**.

The article is here printed according to the text of the seventh volume of Plekhanov's **Works** (1923-1927). The text has been checked with the manuscript which is preserved complete in the Plekhanov archives, with the first publication of the symposium **Material for a Characterization of Our Economic Development** and with the second edition of **The Development of the Monist View of History** in which it was included as the second appendix.

2*. *Tolstoi, Alexei Konstantinovich* (1817-75) – Russian poet and playwright. The poem in question is entitled *Potok-Bogatyr*. (Cf. **Collected Poems**, published by Sovietsky Pisatel Publishing House, 1937, p.288.)

3*. “I see the best and – approve, but follow the worst.” From *Ovid's Metamorphoses*.

4*. Excerpt from Pushkin's epigram *Cruelly Offended by Journals ...* about M.T. Kachenovsky, critic and historian (A.S. Pushkin, **Collected Works** in 10 volumes, Vol.III, published by the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R., 1949, p.108.)

5*. The reviewer of **Russkaya Mysl** – the liberal V. Goltsev. His short review, quoted here by Plekhanov, was published in No.1. of **Russkaya Mysl**, 1895, pp.8-9.

6*. *Grech Nikolai Ivanovich* (1787-1867) and *Bulgarin, F.V.* (1789-1859) – reactionary Russian journalists and writers, secret police agents. Their names symbolized political corruption and dishonesty.

7*. From A.I. Krylov's fable *The Mouse and the Rat*.

8*. See Hegel, **Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse**.

9*. Quotation from the same article by Mikhailovsky *Literature and Life*. (see Note 1*.)

10*. The reference is to the satirical section of the magazine **Sovremennik**, *Svistok* (*Whistle*) (1859-1863). – *Pogodin, Mikhail Petrovich* (1800-1875), reactionary Russian historian and publicist, apologist for monarchy and nobility.

11*. *Lyapkin-Tyapkin* – a personage in Gogol’s comedy *Inspector-General*.

12*. *Dabrolyubov, N. A.* (1836-61) – revolutionary democrat, prominent critic and publicist, close associate of Chernyshevsky. In 1859-61 Dobrolyubov, who wrote under the pen-name Konrad Lilienschwager, supplied the copy and edited the satirical supplement to **Sovremennik** entitled *The Whistle*. *The Whistle* scathingly ridiculed the Liberals’ complacency and inactiveness. It was extremely popular with the democratically-minded intellectuals and aroused hatred and fury among the conservative people who called its editorial workers “Whistlers.”

13*. N. Sieber’s article *The Application of Dialectics to Science* was signed N.S. and published in **Slovo**, 1879, No.11, pp.117-69.

14*. **Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)**.

15*. *Histoire de dix ans* – a work in five volumes written by Louis Blanc in 1841-1844. In it the author severely criticizes the policy of the Orleanist Government in France and depicts the economic and social relations in the ten years from 1830 to 1840. Engels assessed this book very highly.

16*. The intended addition to the second edition was slightly altered in form: “On how Louis Blanc called for the *reconciliation of the classes*. In this respect he cannot be compared with Guizot: the latter was irreconcilable. Obviously, Mikhailovsky only read **Histoire de dix ans**.” (**The Literary Legacy of G.V. Plekhanov**, Coll.IV, p.233.)

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Last updated on 12.2.2005

