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**The dialectics of the Abstract & the Concrete in Marx's Capital**  
**Chapter 4 – Logical Development and Concrete Historicism**

**On the Difference Between the Logical and the  
Historical Methods of Inquiry**

We have already commented on the most significant circumstance that theoretical analysis of empirical facts always naturally coincides with critical analysis of concepts with creative development of the available, historically established categories, and that novel theoretical conception of facts (a new system of categories) never emerges out of nowhere, never 'straight from the facts', as positivists and vulgar scientists would have it, but through a most rigorous scientific critique of the available system of categories.

The problem of creative continuity in the development of theory (the problem of the historical development of science) is always pushed into the foreground when the question arises of the relation of scientific (logical) development to historical.

In his reviews of Marx's ***Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*** Engels showed clearly that the problem of the relation of the logical to the historical directly emerges before the theoretician as the question of ***the way of criticising available theoretical literature***. 'Even after the determination of the method, the critique of economics could still be arranged in two ways – historically or logically'.

However, inasmuch as a novel theoretical conception of facts can only be worked out through critique of available theoretical literature, the mode of critique of theoretical literature coincides essentially with the attitude to facts. Theoretical categories are criticised by comparing them with actual empirical facts. In this respect, there is no difference between the logical and the historical modes of analysis of concepts and facts, and neither can there be.

The difference lies elsewhere. In the so called historical mode of critique of previous theories, they are collated with the same historical facts on the basis of which they were created. For instance, if Marx had chosen the historical mode of critique of Ricardo's theory, he would have had to compare this theory with facts of Ricardo's time – that is, the facts of capitalist development of the late 18th-early 19th century.

The theory of Ricardo, its categories and laws would have been critically compared with facts of more or less remote past, with facts of an undeveloped stage of capitalist reality. Yet this mode of critique assumes that the facts themselves have been studied well or must be studied well, whereas in this case the facts were not studied or comprehended scientifically, moreover, they had not been even collected and summed up. Under these conditions, the historical method of critique was apparently inexpedient. It would have merely delayed work.

Therefore Marx preferred the so-called logical mode of critique and correspondingly the logical mode of considering reality.

In this mode, a historically preceding theory is not critically compared with those very facts on the basis of which it emerged but with the facts existing at a difference stage in the development of the object – with the facts directly observed by Marx himself.

This mode has two decisive advantages: first, the facts from Marx's own time were better known to him and, if need be, could be thoroughly checked out, and second, they revealed the tendencies of capitalist development much more distinctly and acutely than the facts of Ricardo's time.

Everything that emerged rather vaguely in the early-19th century, assumed a much more mature form of expression by the mid-19th century – suffice it to mention here the economic crises.

The logical mode therefore enables one to consider each economic phenomenon (insofar as we are dealing with political economy) precisely at that point where it reaches a maximal expression and development.

Clearly, logical comparison with the actual facts of developed capitalism revealed with greater facility both the falsity of some of Ricardo's theoretical propositions and their rational kernel. At the same time, the reality of Marx's own times was directly expressed. These are the two decisive advantages of the logical mode of analysis of concepts and facts as compared to the historical one.

Still, these advantages would not be apparent and the method of logical analysis itself would not be justified from the philosophical standpoint if we had not shown why and in what way analysis of a higher stage of development can give a historical conception of reality without recourse to a detailed study of the past (for in some cases it is extremely difficult while in others impossible at all, as for instance in the study of cosmology).

In other words, we have to know why and in what way theoretical (systematical logical) analysis of the present can **simultaneously** disclose the mystery of the past – of the history that led to the present.

Let us first analyse two relations, that may in principle exist between the development of science and the history of its subject-matter.

In the first instance theory develops within a period of time that is too short for the object itself to undergo any significant changes. This relation is more characteristic of the natural sciences astronomy (cosmology), physics, chemistry, etc.

In this case, application of the logical mode of analysis of concepts and facts is not only justifiable but even the only possible way. The different stages in the development of the science deal with the same historical stage in the development of the object, with the same object at the same stage of development. Thus, Newton, Laplace, Kant, and Otto Schmidt described the same stage in the development of the solar-planetary system.

Application of the logical way of criticising categories (as well as, correspondingly, the mode of theoretical expression of facts) is in this case naturally justified. The old theory and its categories are conceived as an incomplete, one-sided, and abstract expression of the truth. The new theory appears as a more comprehensive and concrete theoretical expression of the essence of the same facts, the same object. The rational kernel of the previous theory is included in the new one as its abstract component. What is discarded is the conception that the old theory comprised in itself an exhaustive expression of the essence of facts. The old theory (of course, not all of it but the rational kernel of it only) becomes in the process one of the shades of the new theory, a particular instance of the universal principle of the new theory.

The theoretician's right to apply the logical mode of critique of previous theories is here based on the fact that theories and categories analysed with reference to actually given facts reflected ***the very same object*** which he/she now has before his/her eyes. The theoretician therefore arranges a confrontation between theories constructed hundreds of years ago and the facts observed at present, usually without any doubts as to his/her right to do so.

Matters are more complicated in the second case, where different stages in the development of science deal with different historical stages in the development of the object. Here the history of science itself serves as a kind of mirror for the history of the object. Changes in the science reflect major historical changes in the structure of the object itself. The object develops fast enough, and the historical periods in its development coincide with those of the development of the science and its categories.

It goes without saying that this case is more characteristic of the social sciences. A typical example here is political economy. Aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, the science of law are all in much the same situation.

The doubt may naturally arise whether the logical mode of development of theory is in general applicable here.

How can one compare the theory and categories developed hundreds (or even dozens) of years ago with facts observed at present? In this case, the object has changed considerably during these years- will the logical mode of critique of categories be effective in this case? Or will it merely lead to misunderstandings, to expression of different things in the same categories, to theoretically fruitless debate?

The dialectical-materialist conception of development disperses these doubts. It should be taken into account that in this case, too, science throughout its development deals with facts **referring to one and the same object**, although this object appears at different stages and phases of its maturity. That means that those really universal and necessary laws that make up the 'elementary essence' of the object under study, the abstract outlines of its inner structure, remain the same throughout its historical development. On the other hand, those phenomena and categories which appear at the early stages of development but disappear without a trace at the higher ones, objectively prove, by the very fact of their disappearance, that they are not attributive, internally necessary forms of being of the object.

In his analysis of economic theories and categories developed by his predecessors (not only by Adam Smith and David Ricardo but even by Aristotle), Marx confidently applies the logical mode of critique, using the historical mode only occasionally, as an auxiliary one.

This mode of analysis of the theories of the past is not only admissible but also the most expedient in the development of the **general theory** of some subject, as it leaves aside all those moments that are of historical significance only, characterising as they do more or less accidental circumstances within which the development of the object that is of interest for the general theory, proceeded. The logical mode of critique and development of theory gives Marx an objective criterion for distinguishing between categories pertaining to the inner structure of the capitalist organism and all those moments that are connected with forms of production ousted out or destroyed in the course of its development, with the purely local traits of capitalist development in that particular country where the analysed theory emerged, etc.

The advantages of the logical mode of critique of previous theories stem from the fact that the more mature stage in the development of the object, with which the theories of the past are directly compared, reveals the attributive forms of its structure with greater clarity and distinctness, showing them in their quite pure form. The advantage of the logical mode is pointed out by Engels in his review of Marx's **Contribution to the**

***Critique of Political Economy***: ‘... each factor can be examined at the stage of development where it reaches its full maturity, its classical form.’

For this reason, we can critically analyse Hegel’s *Logic* taking into account the facts of development of **modern** science rather than those of Hegel’s times, and this critique will result in dialectical elucidation of these facts as well as in materialist conception of the categories of Hegelian dialectics, of their rational kernel.

Taking this into account, Marx believes it to be not only justifiable but also most expedient to choose the logical mode of critique of previous theories and of developing their rational kernel, in the socio-historical fields of knowledge as well as in the natural sciences where the object remains immutable throughout the development of science. There is no gap, in principle, between the natural and social sciences in this respect. Besides, the situation in the natural sciences is not so simple as it may appear at first sight: although Einstein dealt with ‘the same’ object as Newton did, the immediate facts from which he proceeded in his critique of Newtonian mechanics were different. The sensual-practical experimental activity of the social man showed him the same object much more fully and comprehensively. Thus from this side, too, the right to apply the logical mode of critique and development of theory in the social sciences is substantiated just as well as in the natural ones.

In both types of sciences, the social man’s sensual-practical activity proves to be the mediating link between the object ‘in itself’ and the theoretician’s thought. For this reason, **practice** appears as the decisive argument in the analysis of the relation between the natural and social sciences, which refutes the neo-Kantian idea of the abyss that in principle exists between the methods of the natural and the socio-historical sciences.

Of course, Marx does not rule out the historical method of critique of his predecessors at all. Marx continually resorts to it, revealing the historical circumstances within which the theory that he criticises emerged. Still, the historical method of critique plays but a subordinate, auxiliary role with him. The principal method of the critique and development of theory remains the logical one.

‘To develop the laws of bourgeois economy, it is not necessary to write **the real history of the production relations**. But the correct view and deduction of the latter as relations that grew historically, always leads to certain first correlations – like the empirical numerical data in the natural sciences – which point to the past lying behind this system. These indications, together with correct conception of the present, offer then the key to the understanding of the past,’ [**Grundrisse**] wrote Marx in 1858.

## **Logical Development as Expression of Concrete Historicism in Investigation**

In the above, we formulated the question as follows: why and in what way the theoretical analysis (analysis of facts through a critique of categories) proceeding from the results of the historical process, can in itself yield an essentially historical (though logical in form) expression of reality even where real (empirical) history leading to these results is not directly studied in detail.

The answer to this question can only be obtained through considering the real dialectical laws which govern any actual development in nature, society, and in cognition itself in thought. If, in studying the results of a certain historical process, we can discover the history of their emergence and development sublated in them, if we can, proceeding from the results of history, theoretically reconstruct the general outline of their emergence, this possibility is based in the first place on the fact that the objective result of the development preserves in itself its own history in a changed, sublated form.

Here again, a logical problem is transformed into the problem of law-governed correlation between historical development and its own results. As we pointed out in the above, the really universal and necessary moments characterising the object as a concrete historical whole are preserved in it throughout its existence and development, constituting the law of its concrete historical development.

The problem, then, is to find out in what shape and form the historical conditions of the object's emergence and development are preserved at the higher stages of its development. Here we confront the fact of dialectical relation between the historically preceding conditions of the emergence of the object and their later consequences that have developed on this basis.

The dialectics of this relation consists in a kind of inversion of the historically preceding into the subsequent and vice versa, the transformation of the condition into the conditioned, of the effect into a cause, of the complex into the elementary, etc.

Owing to this objective dialectics, a situation arises which appears to be paradoxical at first sight: a logical presentation of the laws of the historical process (a conception of facts that is logical in form and concrete historical in essence) is a reversal of the picture that appears to be natural and corresponding to the empirically stated order of the development of the object.

To understand this dialectics, the following fact should be taken into account. Any real process of concrete development (in nature, society, or consciousness) never begins from scratch or in the ether of pure reason but on the basis of premises and conditions created by different processes subject to different laws, and ultimately, by the entire previous development of the universe.

Thus humanity begins its specific history on the basis of premises and conditions created before it and independently of it by nature. The emergence of life (a specifically biological development) implies very complex chemical combinations formed independently from life. Any qualitatively new form of development emerges within the context of circumstances arising independently from it and, moreover, its entire subsequent development takes place within the same context, a very complex interaction with them. That much is clear. But then we run into a difficulty – the dialectical nature of relations between lower and higher forms of development, and objective changes of their role in this relationship.

The point is that a historically posterior result arising from the entire preceding development does not remain merely a passive result, merely a consequence. Each newly arisen (higher) form of interaction becomes a now universal principle dominating all historically preceding forms, transforming them into secondary external forms of its specific development, into 'organs of its body', as Marx put it in connection with one instance of this kind. They begin to move according to laws characteristic of the new system of interaction in which they now function.

The new and higher (historically later) system of concrete interaction begins to preserve and actively reproduce by its own movement, all the really necessary conditions of its movement. It generates, as it were, out of itself everything that was originally created by the previous development and not by itself.

In this case, too, development takes the spiral-like form which we analysed in the first part of the work as a most characteristic feature of internal interaction, of concreteness in the genuine sense of the concept.

The necessarily assumed condition of historical emergence of the object becomes in this case the necessarily posited consequence of its specific development.

In this form, the historically necessary conditions of the emergence of the object are preserved in its structure throughout its development, its specific movement. All those moments which, though present at the birth of the new form of development, were not absolutely necessary conditions of this birth, are not, in the final analysis, preserved or reproduced. These forms are not observed at the higher stages of development of the object – they disappear in the course of its historical maturing, becoming lost in the darkness of the past.

For this reason, a logical consideration of the higher stage of development of an object, of an already developed system of interaction, reveals a picture in which all the really necessary conditions of its emergence and evolution are **retained** and all the more or less accidental, purely historical conditions of its emergence are absent.

Logical analysis does not therefore have to free from the purely historical accidentals and from the historical form the presentation of those really universal and absolutely necessary conditions under which the given system of interaction could only emerge and, having emerged, could continue to exist and develop. The historical process itself does the work of this purification instead of and before the theoretician.

In other words, the objective historical process itself carries out the abstraction which retains only the concrete universal moments of development freed from the historical form dependent on the concurrence of more or less accidental circumstances.

Theoretical establishment of such moments results in concrete historical abstractions. That was the principle by which Marx was confidently guided in analysing the categories of political economy.

Labour power as such, as ability for work in general, one of the historical premises of the origin of capital, in the same way as land, air, and mineral deposits. As such, it remains a mere premise of the emergence of capital without being at the same time its consequence or product. On the other hand, capital actively reproduces (engenders as its product) **labour power as commodity**, that is, as the concrete historical form in which labour power functions in the capacity of an element of capital.

The same thing occurs with commodities, money, commercial profit, rent, etc.: as such, they belong to 'antediluvian' premises of capitalist development, to its 'prehistoric' conditions. As concrete historical forms of being of capital, reflecting in their movement its specific history, they are products of capital itself.

As a result, all the really necessary conditions for the emergence of capital are observed on the surface of developed capital as its secondary forms and they are observed in a form that is free from its historical integument.

Reproducing them as its product, capital erases all vestiges of their original historical image. Simultaneously, logical analysis provides indications for historical inquiry, too. In its conclusions it guides the historian towards the search for the really necessary conditions and premises of the emergence of a certain process, providing a criterion for distinguishing between the essential and the merely striking, the necessary and the purely accidental, etc.

The dialectics described here does not, of course, take place in the case of capital only. That is a universal law.

The same thing may be observed, for instance, in the formation of the biological form of the movement of matter. Originally, the elementary protein body emerges independently of any biological processes, simply as a chemical product, and a very unstable product at that.

Even now we do not know with sufficient precision in what way and under what concrete conditions this elementary biological formation emerged. Chemistry cannot as yet create a living protein body artificially, it cannot create conditions in which such a body would necessarily emerge. That means that chemists do not yet know what those conditions were.

What is reliably known and objectively established, is the fact that within a developed biological organism these conditions (the entire necessary totality of these conditions) are actually present, they are actually realised as long as the organism lives. The conditions under which matter coming from the outside is transformed into protein, into living matter, can here be determined quite objectively and strictly. At the same time the original products of the chemism may be discovered which are capable of becoming a living body under proper conditions, taking into account that not any substance can be assimilated by the organism.

Thus the study of processes taking place in the organisms living at present, can and does give a key to an understanding of the origin of life on the earth – true, in the most general outline only.

We can conclude that the logical development of categories presenting the internal structure of the object in the form in which it is observed at the higher stages of its development, leads in the first approximation to a conception of the history of its origin, of the law of the formation of this structure. Logical development therefore coincides with historical development internally, in the essence of things. But this coincidence is profoundly dialectical, and it cannot be achieved without a comprehension of this dialectics.

## Abstract and Concrete Historicism

A concrete understanding of reality cannot be attained without a historical approach to it. The reverse is also true – historicism devoid of concreteness is pure fiction, pseudohistoricism. In these days, one can hardly find a scientist who would reject the idea of development in its general abstract form. But the standpoint of historicism, unless it is combined with the dialectical idea of concreteness, inevitably becomes empty verbiage. Non-concrete, that is, abstract historicism, far from being alien to the metaphysical mode of reasoning, constitutes a most characteristic feature of it. Metaphysicians always expostulate willingly and at length on the need for a historical approach to phenomena, making excursion into the history of the object, and working on 'historical substantiations' of their theoretical constructions. Distinguishing between the concrete historicism of the method of materialist dialectics and the abstract historicism of metaphysicians is not as easy as might seem at first sight.

It is very easy to slide to the standpoint of abstract historicism (or pseudohistoricism). Moreover, this standpoint appears to be the most natural one. Indeed, isn't it natural to consider the history which created an object if one wants to form a historical conception of the object?

But this simple and natural view quickly leads to insoluble difficulties. To begin with, any historically emerging object has behind it, as its past, the entire infinite history of the Universe. Therefore, an attempt to understand a phenomenon historically through tracing out all the processes and premises preceding its birth inevitably leads into bad infinity and for this reason, if not for any other, will not result in anything definite or concrete.

Whether one wishes to do so or not, but in going back one will have to stop somewhere, to begin at some point. Now, what is one to begin with? Abstract historicism sets no limits here for subjectivism and arbitrariness.

But that is not all. The standpoint of abstract historicism leads, inevitably and irrespectively of one's desires, to crude antihistoricism, under the guise of the historical approach. It is not difficult to see why that is so. Bourgeois economists, who interpret capital as accumulated labour in general, quite logically and naturally consider the hour of its historical birth to be the hour in which the primitive man picked up a club. If capital is conceived as money bringing new money from circulation, the historical beginnings of capital will inevitably be found somewhere in Phoenicia. An antihistorical conception of the essence or nature of the phenomenon is in this case justified by 'historical' arguments. There is nothing surprising about it – the comprehension of the past is closely linked with the comprehension of the present. Before one considers the history of the object, one is obliged to form a clear conception of the nature of the object whose history is to be studied.

The result of application of the principle of abstract historicism is this: the history of a certain phenomenon is described in terms of facts pertaining to the history of quite different phenomena, those that merely prepared the emergence of the former phenomenon historically. By this trick, the given concrete historical phenomenon appears to the theoretician either eternal or in any case very ancient, much more ancient than it actually is.

A most striking example of this abstract historical approach, of conception that is historical in appearance and antihistorical in essence, is the bourgeois economists' explanation of the primitive accumulation.

The bourgeois economist also views this process 'historically'. He will easily agree that capital is not an eternal phenomenon, that it must have emerged somewhere and in some manner. The history of its origin consists in that the means of production were in some way concentrated in the hands of a few persons. How did that happen historically?

These ways are extremely varied. In any case, the fact remains that the means of production were first concentrated in the hands of the future capitalist in any manner but exploitation of wage labour, through frugality, the future capitalist's own labour, successful commercial operations, simple robbery, feudal legacy, and so on and so forth.

From this, the bourgeois economist draws the conclusion that in its origin, and consequently in its essence, capital is not the product of unpaid-for labour of the wage worker. As for the worker himself, he/she descended 'historically' from the serf who ran away to town from a cruel landlord, or a craftsman impoverished through inability, or a lazy vagabond. In other words, the wage labourer was created by processes other than capitalist exploitation. The capitalist offering him work now appears as a benefactor.

It is quite apparent here that a formally historical explanation is made into a means of shameless apology for the existing state of things. Historical substantiation becomes an argument in favour of an antihistorical conception of both the process of primitive accumulation and of the nature of capital. Historical arguments are used to present capital as an 'eternal' and 'natural' relation. The secret of the trick is in the history of the origin of the historical premises of capital being directly presented as the history of capital itself as a concrete historical phenomenon.

The real historical beginning of the development of capital, as Marx showed, was the point at which capital began to build its body out of the unpaid-for labour of the wage worker. Only at this point does its specific concrete history begin. As for the original concentration of the means of production in the hands of the future capitalist, it may take any form whatever – that has no significance for the history of capital as capital and no relevance to the being of man, possessing it, as the being of a capitalist.

Originally, our mode of appropriation is not that of a capitalist, and the ways in which he appropriates the product of labour has no bearing on his history as a capitalist. They lie somewhere below the lower boundary of the history of capital, just as processes that created the premises of life, the chemical processes, lie below the lower limit of the history of life, pertaining to the field of chemistry rather than of biology.

The same thing has to be borne in mind in logic, in order not to take the history of the premises of a concept (abstractions in general, words expressing the general in their meaning, etc.) for the history of the concept itself.

Thus the significance becomes apparent of the principle of **concrete historicism** which imposes the requirement of establishing, in a strictly objective manner, the point at which the real history of the object under consideration begins, the genuinely concrete starting point of its origin.

The problem is the same whether we are dealing with the emergence of the capitalist system or the historical origin of man or the point at which life was born on the earth or the ability to think in concepts.

The precepts of abstract historicism merely disorientate the theoretician in this decisive field of theoretical analysis. As is well known, scientists often took the biological prehistory of human society for an undeveloped form of human existence, and biological laws, for abstract, elementary, and universal laws of human development. Examples of the same kind are attempts to deduce man's aesthetic feeling from certain externally similar phenomena of the animal world – the beauty of the peacock's tail, the colours of the butterfly's wing and other purely biological adaptive phenomena.

The historicism of the logical method of Marx, Engels, and Lenin is concrete. It means that the concrete history of a concrete object should be considered in each particular case rather than history in general. The former is of course more difficult than the latter. But scientific research cannot be guided by the principle of ease, the principle of 'economy of intellectual effort', despite the neo-Kantian illusions. Scientific development can only be guided by the principle of correspondence with the object, and where the object is complex, there simply is nothing to be done.

The logical development of categories, in the form of which the construction of the system of science is completed, must coincide with the historical development of the object, in the same way as reflection coincides with that which is reflected. The sequence of the categories itself must reproduce the real historical sequence in which the object of investigation and its structure are formed.

That is the main principle of dialectics. The whole difficulty lies in the fact that the concrete history of the concrete object is not so easy to single out in the ocean of the real facts of empirical history, for it is not the ‘pure history’ of the given concrete object that is given in contemplation and immediate notion but a very complicated mass of interconnected processes of development mutually interacting and altering the forms of their manifestation. The difficulty lies in singling out from the empirically given picture of the total historical process the cardinal points of the development of this particular concrete object, of the given, concrete system of interaction. Logical development coinciding with the historical process of the formation of a concrete whole should rigorously establish its historical beginning, its birth, and later trace its evolution as a sequence of necessary and law-governed moments. That is the whole difficulty.

The capitalist system, for instance, does not emerge out of nothing but on the basis of and within historically preceding forms of economic relations, its concrete development involving the struggle and overcoming of these forms. Having originally emerged as a rather inconspicuous but more viable mode of economic relations, this system gradually transforms all types of production existing at the time of its birth in accordance with its own requirements and in its own image. It gradually converts earlier independent and even alien forms of economy into forms of its own realisation, subordinating them, partly breaking them down so that there is not a trace of them left, partly continuing to drag (sometimes for a very long time) the debris that it had no time to destroy, and partly developing into full flowering something that had previously existed only as a tentative tendency.

As a result, the historical development of a concrete whole, conceived in its essence and expressed in logical development does not coincide with the picture that is to be formed on the surface of events, that is open to the theoretically naked eye. The essence and the phenomena here also coincide only dialectically, only through contradiction.

Therefore the logical development of categories intended to reflect the real historical sequence of the formation of the analysed system of interacting phenomena, cannot be directly guided by the sequence in which certain aspects of the whole in the process of formation appeared or played the decisive role on the surface of the historical process open to empirical contemplation. ‘It would be inexpedient and wrong therefore to present the economic categories successively in the order in which they have played the dominant role in history’ that was the way in which Marx categorically summed up the methodological significance of this real circumstance.

The theoretician who accepts abstractly interpreted historicism is guided by the principle of analysis which Marx defines as-inexpedient and wrong. When he considers phenomena in the sequence in which they follow one another in the historical time, in the sequence which appears at first sight as the most natural one, in actual fact he considers them in a sequence that is the reverse of the real and objective one.

The apparent and imaginary correspondence between the logical and the historical here conceals from the theoretician an actual absence of correspondence. Very often (much more often than the empiricist believes) the genuine objective cause of a phenomenon appears on the surface of the historical process later than its own consequence.

For instance, the general crisis of overproduction in the capitalist world is empirically manifested first of all in the form of disturbances in the sphere of bank credits, as a financial crisis, later it involves commerce and only at the very end does it reveal itself in the sphere of direct production as a real general crisis of overproduction. The superficial observer, who takes succession in time for the only historical principle, concludes from this that misunderstandings and conflicts in bank clearances are the cause, the basis, and the source of the general crisis. In other words, he/she takes the most abstract and derivative effect for the real basis of events, while the objective basis inevitably begins to seem the effect of its own effect.

In this way crude empiricism yields the same absurd result as the most refined scholasticism. Crude empiricism in general inevitably becomes the worst kind of scholasticism when it is raised to the principle of theoretical explanation of events.

From the standpoint of science and of genuine historicism it is quite obvious however that overproduction had taken place before it had time to manifest itself in disturbances and confusion in the sphere of bank clearance, these disturbances merely reflecting in their own way the actually accomplished fact and in no way creating it. Logical development of categories in the system of science corresponds to the genuine historical sequence concealed from empirical observation, but it contradicts the external appearance, the superficial aspect of this sequence.

The correctly established logical order of development of categories in the system of science discloses the secret of the real objective sequence of development of phenomena, of the aspects of the object, permitting to understand the chronological sequence itself just as scientifically rather than empirically, from the standpoint of the ordinary person. Logical development of categories in science contradicts temporal sequence exactly because it corresponds to the genuine and objective sequence of the formation of the concrete structure of the object under study. Herein lies the dialectics of the logical and the historical.

The ‘historically anterior’ continually becomes the ‘logically posterior’ in the course of development, and vice versa. Phenomena that emerged earlier than others as often as not become forms of manifestation of processes that started much later. The beginning (the genuine beginning) of a new branch of development, of a novel concrete historical system of interaction, cannot be understood as a product of a smooth evolution of the historically preceding forms. What takes place here is a genuine leap, a break in the development, in which a fundamentally new concrete historical form of development begins.

This new direction of development can only be understood out of itself, from its intrinsic contradictions. Each newly appearing concrete historical process has its own concrete historical beginning. In regard of economic development Marx expressed this circumstance in these terms:

‘There is in every social formation a particular branch of production which determines the position and importance of all the others. and the relations obtaining in this branch accordingly determine the relations of all other branches as well. It is as though light of a particular hue were cast upon everything, tingeing all other colours and modifying their specific features; or as if a special ether determined the specific gravity of everything found in it.’ (Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*)

Clearly this law is not restricted in its action to social development or social phenomena in general. Development in nature also takes this form and cannot take any other. Here too, a new concrete form of development emerges on the basis of and within the framework of those that precede it, becoming a concrete universal principle of a new system and as such involving these chronologically preceding forms in its specific concrete history.

From this point on the historical destiny of these historically preceding phenomena comes to be determined by entirely new laws. The chemical substances involved in the development of life behave in this process in quite a different manner from the way they had behaved before and independently from it. They are subject to the universal law of this higher new form, and their movement can only be understood from the laws of life, from the concrete universal laws of this higher and chronologically later form of the motion of matter.

The laws of these elementary forms cannot, of course, be violated, abolished or altered. But they become here subordinate laws, abstract universal laws that can explain absolutely nothing in the movement of the concrete whole the external manifestations of which they became. The development of organic life also results in the formation of ‘a special kind of ether’ which determines the share of any being that exists in it.

This 'specific ether', that is, the concrete universal principle of a new and higher form of movement that emerges chronologically at a later stage but becomes the dominant principle, must be understood in science before any other and first of all on its own merits, from the internally inherent concrete universal contradictions.

The historically preceding elements that, owing to the dialectics of development, became a secondary, auxiliary moment of the new form of movement, a kind of material in which some new concrete historical process is realised, may indeed be understood only from the concrete universal law of the higher form in whose movement they are involved.

These historically preceding elements may long pre-exist the logically prior ones, they may even constitute the condition of origin of this logically anterior, concrete universal phenomenon, later becoming its manifestation or product.

Rent as a form of capitalist economy cannot be comprehended before capital is comprehended, while capital may and must be understood in its internal contradictions before rent, though rent historically emerged earlier than capital and even served as a historical condition of its origin. Quite a few landlords, having accumulated feudal rent, later began to use it as capital. The same is true of commercial profit.

The historical destiny of rent and commercial profit as elements of the capitalist whole, as forms of manifestation and modifications of capital may be compared, for graphic effect, to the destiny of a block of marble, out of which the statue of a man is sculptured.

The concrete form of marble can in no way be explained from the properties of marble itself. Although it is the form of marble, in its real substance it is by no means the form of marble as a product of nature. Marble owes its form not to itself, not to its own nature, but to the process in which it is involved – the process of man's artistic development.

For millions of years marble lay in the ground, it appeared long before man, not only before the sculptor's time but also before mankind as a whole. But the concrete form in which it is displayed in the hall of a museum is the product of man's development, which commenced much later than marble as such, marble as mineral, appeared. That is an active form of some quite different process, a process that is realised in marble and through marble but naturally cannot be understood in terms of marble alone.

The situation is the same with the concrete historical form of the existence of rent, interest, commercial profit and similar forms and categories. In capitalist production, they are secondary, subordinate forms of economy, forms of manifestation of surplus-value of a form that appeared much later than they themselves did.

This concrete universal form should be understood in science before and quite independently from all the their concrete history as the history of forms of being of surplus value began when and where they were involved in the production and accumulation of surplus-value, so that they became organs of its body and a mode of its realisation. Before that point, their destinies had no internal relation whatever to the history of capitalism, to the history expressed in the sequence of categories of political economy. They had existed before that moment outside the history of capital, side by side with it but quite independently from it. But they became involved in the formation of the capitalist system, turning into concrete historical forms and elements of the given system, only in those areas where the concrete universal form of capital, which had developed independently from them, expressed its movement through them.

Thus logical development does not reproduce history as a whole, but rather the concrete history of the given concrete historical whole, of the given concrete system of phenomena interacting in a specific manner.

The logical order of the categories of science directly corresponds to this history and its sequence; it is the latter that is expressed in a theoretically generalised form. Logical development of categories and their concrete definitions cannot therefore be guided by the principle of abstract historicism (or pseudohistoricism), the principle of temporal sequence of the emergence of diverse forms of the analysed whole in history.

Contrariwise, it is only logical development of categories that is guided by the relation in which the elements of the analysed concreteness stand to one another in the developed object, in the object at the highest point of its development and maturity, that discovers the mystery of the genuine objective sequence of the formation of the object, of the moulding of its internal structure.

Following this path, we can always discover the genuinely natural (rather than the seemingly natural) order of development of all the aspects of the analysed concrete historical whole. In this case we shall attain a real coincidence of the logical and the historical. Otherwise we can only arrive at a divergence between the two, at an empirical scholastic expression of history, but not at its objective theoretical reflection in concept.

The inquiry into the system of capitalist production in *Capital* was a splendid confirmation of the correctness of this methodological principle, of

Marx's and Engels' philosophical view of the dialectics of the historical process and its theoretical reproduction.

To form a genuinely historical conception of the capitalist formation, of the laws of its historical emergence, development, and decline, Marx studied first of all the **existing** state of this formation, proceeding from the contemporary situation, from the relation in which the diverse elements of its necessary structure stand to one another proceeding from this existing factually stated situation, he analysed the concepts and categories of political economy, studied these concepts critically, and unfolded, on the basis of this analysis, his theoretical conception of the facts, a system of theoretical definitions.

Each of the aspects and elements of the structure of the capitalist organism found therefore its concrete theoretical expression, and was reflected in a concrete historical abstraction.

The theoretical definitions of each category of political economy were formed by Marx through tracing the history of its emergence not the empirical history but the history 'sublated' in its results.

This inquiry led him directly to a conception of the real historically necessary premises of the emergence of bourgeois economy, offering thereby a key to a theoretical understanding of the empirical history of its emergence and evolution. On the other hand, owing to this method of inquiry, the bourgeois formation itself emerged as a system of historically maturing premises of the birth of another, new, and higher system of social relations – of socialism, into which the capitalist system of production of material life inevitably develops under the pressure of the internal contradictions of its evolution.