

Science as the political action of the working class
Bases for the *Centro para la Investigación como Crítica Práctica* - CICP
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The social being of the working class: free consciousness as the concrete form of alienated consciousness

Human natural history¹ is the history of the transformation of the material conditions of social life through labor. The development of the human being as a historical subject is nothing but the development of human capacity to act in a conscious and voluntary way upon the rest of nature, in order to transform the latter into a means for human life. In other words, the development of the human being as a historical subject is the development of the human condition as the subject of production, i.e., of human productive subjectivity. This development is the only materialistic concrete starting point, and therefore the only scientific one² to generate consciousness as regards any historical process.

The capitalist mode of production starts by dissolving any general direct organization of social labor based on relations of personal dependence, thus turning the producers into free individuals. Each concrete element of social labor is thus given the specific form of private labor performed independently from the rest. Then total social labor-power is allocated to its useful concrete forms through an autonomous system. As it is performed in a private and independent way³, the abstract socially necessary labor -a simple productive expenditure of the human body in whatever concrete form it is performed⁴ and, as such, a natural condition for human existence whatever the social modality that rules it⁵- acquires a historically specific social form. After it materializes into its products, it appears represented as the aptitude of these products to relate to each other in exchange, thus placing their private and independent producers within a social relationship.⁶ That is to say, materialized privately performed socially necessary abstract labor is represented as the value that determines use-values as commodities.⁷

Since they need to generate their general social relationship through material production, the free individual consciousness and will of the producers that privately and independently organize their social labor are subjected to a historically specific determination. They have to submit to the needs which the value-form of their own material products imposes on them. They must act as personifications of their own commodities; they need to produce value as a matter of life or death. Commodity producers are free from any personal servitude because they are the servants of the social power of their products. Whereas it is the will of the producers that completely dominates the private and independent exercise of individual labor, these same producers are in turn completely subordinated to the social powers of the material product of that self-same labor. From the point of view of the participation of private and independent producers in social labor, their consciousness and will matter only inasmuch as they personify the powers of their commodities. The productive power of their social labor stands removed from the producers themselves as an alienated

* Taken from the book *El capital: razón histórica, sujeto revolucionario y conciencia* by Juan Iñigo Carrera, Ediciones Cooperativas, Buenos Aires, 2003.

¹ Marx 1965, p. 10.

² Marx 1965, p. 373.

³ Marx 1965, p. 42.

⁴ Marx 1965, pp. 38, 44 and 46.

⁵ Marx 1965, p. 71.

⁶ Marx 1965, pp. 72-74.

⁷ Marx 1965, p. 38.

power, as a power incarnate in their commodities. The free consciousness and will of commodity producers is the specific form within which their alienated consciousness and will exist.

Now, at the same time, only because they are submitted to the domination of commodities, human consciousness and will determine themselves as free from all alien personal domination. In the previous modes of production, starting with primitive communism, there were no individuals freed from relations of personal dependency in the organization of their social labor. Those who stop at the appearances of the circulation of commodities believe that their possessors are abstractly free subjects by nature. Nevertheless, human freedom is but a social relation that in its historical development up to today has only existed and exists under the concrete form of not being submitted to relations of personal dependency because one is submitted to the social powers of the product of labor. Hence, the development of freedom has no necessity other than that that could emerge from the development of its very alienation.

Therefore, social production is not directly aimed at producing use-values, but at producing the general social relation itself, i.e., value. In its condition as the objectified general social relation that represents the privately and independently performed social labor, value takes the substantive form of money. Money represents all the concrete modalities of social labor and, therefore, it is in itself the latent capacity to set in motion all of that modalities as the starting point of the process of social metabolism. Thus, the organization of social production simply does not start from the alienated consciousness of each free individual putting in action his/her part in social labor. On the contrary, alienated consciousness does but express the necessity of the substantive social relation, which puts in action social labor without having as its immediate objective the production of use values, but the expanded reproduction of the very same substantive social relation. Hence, it is about the valorization of value, about the production of surplus value. Such is the capitalist mode of organizing social production. Capital is but the specific historical form in which the capacity to organize the labor of society gets into action as the attribute embodied in a thing that has been produced by previous social labor, with the immediate object of producing more of that capacity to organize the labor of society as an attribute embodied in the material product of previously performed labor. Capital thus becomes itself the concrete immediate subject of social production and consumption.

As free independent individuals, wage laborers enter their general social relation as personifications of their only sellable commodity, their labor power. This means that the working class has nowhere from which to obtain any historically specific revolutionary powers other than those it gets from its own general social relation, namely, the production of surplus value. To be precise, the history of the production of surplus value is nothing but the history of the production of the material revolutionary powers of the working class and, therefore, of its revolutionary consciousness and will.⁸

The working class constitutes itself as such through its necessarily antagonistic relationship with capital in terms of selling its labor power at its value. Nevertheless, the development of its revolutionary powers is not limited to the development of the formal subsumption of labor to capital. Through the production of relative surplus labor –i.e., making labor power cheaper by multiplying the productivity of the labor that produces the worker's means of existence through a continuous technical revolution- labor really becomes subsumed

⁸ 'It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do.' Marx, Karl, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company*, in Marx & Engels Collected Works, Volume 4, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975, p. 37, reproduced in <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch04.htm#4.4.c>.

under capital.⁹ Even in their unity as working-class and in their very process of individual consumption, the workers become an attribute of capital.¹⁰ Thus, capital produces and reproduces them as human beings, i.e., as bearers of consciousness.¹¹ This happens to the point that capital even rules the laws of their biological reproduction.¹² In the circulation of commodities, the consciousness of the laborers appears to be free. In fact, the consciousness and will of the laborers are defined as the necessary concrete forms taken by the alienation of labor's powers as capital's powers, namely, their own objectified general social relation which has become the alienated concrete subject of social existence.

The capitalist transformation of the materiality of labor and of the laborer

Capital constantly revolutionizes the material conditions of production in the pursuit of relative surplus value. This revolution is not merely limited to the kind of a necessary large-scale collective process involved in working in mechanized big industry. As the system of machinery is developed, so capital tends to revolutionize the very material nature of labor. Essentially, labor ceases to consist of the conscious exertion of human strength and ability applied on tools in order to make them act upon an object to transform its use value. Rather, it tends to consist of the conscious expenditure of human body applied to the scientific control of natural forces and to the objectification of this control as an attribute of machinery, so as to make those natural forces automatically act upon tools in order to make the latter bring about the transformation of the object.¹³

Consequently, commodity producers are collective individuals -formed by doubly-free workers, both in the sense of not being submitted to anyone's personal domination and of being separated from the means of production required to produce their existence that confronts them as an alien social power- who perform their labors in a private and independent way. As independent private producers, these collective producers have complete control of their individual labor processes, but none at all over the latter's general social character. Therefore, their consciousness and will as collectives formed by free individuals must needs submit to the rule of the social powers of the material product of their labor, i.e., capital: they must produce surplus value. The free consciousness and will of the members of the collective laborers are the concrete forms of their consciousness alienated in capital.

Capitalist universality and fragmentation of the workers' productive subjectivity

The capitalist mode of production tends to determine laborers as social subjects whose freedom develops as the materialization of their own labor processes -which is governed in an alienated way- necessarily tends to transform them into the bearers of a scientific, i.e., objective, therefore, free, consciousness that aims to acquire an universal scope. And, as capital moves forward by eliminating the particularities that correspond to the direct application of labor power on its objects from the actual materiality of the labor process, it moves forward by universalizing the attributes of labor power; which means that it moves forward by universalizing the conditions of its reproduction, that is, the attributes of human consumption.

⁹ Marx 1965, pp. 509-510.

¹⁰ Marx 1965, p. 573.

¹¹ Marx 1965, p. 578.

¹² Marx 1965, p. 643.

¹³ Marx 1965, pp. 386-8. Marx 1973, pp. 704-07 and 713-14.

Nevertheless, the capitalist mode of production performs this transformation inasmuch as the conscious organization of social production is, at the same time, the necessary concrete form through which its opposite is able to realize itself. That is to say, inasmuch as conscious organization is the necessary concrete form in which the alienation of the productive powers of human labor is realized under the shape of an attribute of its own material product converted into the general social relation. In other words, inasmuch as it is about the socialization of private labor. Therefore, capital can only develop the universal powers and needs of the subjects of social labor through their opposite, namely, by constantly holding back and atomizing the universality of labor power. By privately socializing labor, capital revolutionizes the materiality of the labor process at the expense of the fragmentation of social labor power by determining the productive subjectivity of the laborers of large-scale industry in three contrasting ways.

Capital first needs to develop the productive subjectivity of the segment of the working class that participates in the collective laborer as the bearer of the latter's capacity to make progress towards universal control on natural forces and towards conscious control on the collective nature of labor. In itself, the development of this productive subjectivity reveals the general trend inherent to the historically specific development of the productive forces of society under the capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless, this does not mean that capital is moving forward without further ado. On the contrary, to begin with, capital itself constantly balances out its own historical general trend, thus turning each advance in the area of control of the natural forces into an objectified attribute of the machine. This means that any form of labor which exerts the afore-mentioned control becomes simplified, from the manual to the intellectual. At the same time, in the process of expanding its alienated productive subjectivity, the collective laborer broadens his sphere of action by taking charge of his self-coercion and the general representation of capital. The general antagonistic relation between those that personify labor power and those who personify capital permeates the collective laborer and, hence, the working class itself. The individual laborers that are in charge of those tasks appear both to themselves and to others as the very negation of that which they are; namely, members of the class of free individuals that only count on their labor power as a sellable commodity, i.e., forced laborers for social capital, members of the working class. Consequently, even the part of the working class determined by capital as the direct bearer of the development of productive subjectivity suffers from the fact that its capacity to become aware of its own orientation as an alienated subject of social production is stunted. Therefore, capital prevents this part of the working class from fulfilling the very historic potential for which it was created by capital itself: the development of the productive forces of society through the objective conscious organization of social labor. This mutilation of objective consciousness -which takes the shape of its opposite; alienated consciousness- can only be embodied in the very form taken by the scientific method that produces it. Hence, it can only arise from scientific method, being, at the same time, the requisite concrete form of its opposite, i.e., ideology. Secondly, the system of machinery degrades the productive subjectivity of the laborers that develop and use their manual skills in the direct process of production. They become mere appendages of the objectified control of natural forces, i.e., appendages of machinery. Their labor is thus continuously disqualified, deprived of any content beyond the mechanical repetition of an ever-increasingly simplified task. Each leap forward made by capital in the process of appropriating natural forces, that is, each leap forward made by the productivity of labor through the development of machinery, means that capital expels this type of laborer from the direct process of production on a wide-scale basis. And it does the same to those detail laborers still bound by the division of labor in manufacturing. It replaces the necessary intervention of their skillful subjectivity in the direct process of production with the objectified capabilities of a machine. Nevertheless, at the same

time that each technical leap forward expels this type of living labor in order to replace it with dead labor, it generates a multiplicity of new areas for its exploitation. These areas emerge precisely as a result of this new step in the degradation of the productive attributes of both types of laborers. Consequently, the development of the productive forces of society ruled by the production of relative surplus value through the use of machinery carries within itself its own negation. It does so by multiplying the working population that it needs to reproduce with an ever-deteriorating productive subjectivity rather than by developing its productive subjectivity.

Thirdly, capital accumulation based on the extraction of relative surplus value by means of the system of machinery transforms an increasing part of the laboring population into surplus population with regard to the necessities of capital. Capital is the general social relation of the laboring population, i.e., the general social relation through which the working class reproduces its natural existence. Therefore, to be transformed into a surplus for capital means to be deprived of the capacity to produce one's own natural existence. Thus, capital extracts up to the last trace of productive subjectivity from the laboring surplus population, condemning it to death. In this brutal manner, capital undermines the contribution that growing segments of the laboring population could make to the development of the productive forces of society. The global unit of capital accumulation realizes itself in the form of independent national processes. This form, itself a manifestation of the private nature of labor, exacerbates the fragmentation of the working class based on the differentiation of its productive subjectivity. Thus, global accumulation takes shape through the formation of a limited number of nations where capital tends to foster the type of work that expands the productive attributes of the laborer. At the same time, the complete development of global unity determines other countries as spaces of accumulation limited by the production of certain commodities. This national production is based upon the relatively favorable presence of natural conditions that affect the productivity of labor in ways that capital cannot control. In these national spaces, capital accumulation develops its specific nature based on the appropriation of ground rent. The landowners and the normal capitals that, thanks to this appropriation valorize themselves as freed from developing the productive forces of society, are partners.¹⁴ Capital accumulation determines a third type of national space as the location of the productive processes that essentially require a labor power whose productive attributes have deteriorated and which has been determined as a latent or stagnant laboring surplus population. Finally, the global unity of capital accumulation determines that other countries have no greater potential than that of being repositories of the consolidated laboring surplus population.

Based on this national differentiation, capital acts against its historical tendency towards the universalization of the conditions in which it reproduces the laborers of large-scale industry. It does so by linking the different productive subjectivities of the specialized organs making up the collective laborer to the different conditions in which each national labor power is reproduced. Hence, the intensified international competition imposed on the national segments of the working class adds to its capacity for exploitation. The question of how the working class can tackle its double fragmentation brought about by capital underlies the issue about the forms of consciousness that are able to organize its political action.

The historical *raison d'être* of the capitalist mode of production

¹⁴ The Argentine case is one of the clearest examples of this specific feature. See: Iñigo Carrera, Juan, "La acumulación de capital en la Argentina", Documento del CICP, Buenos Aires, 1998 and "Crisis y perspectivas del capitalismo argentino", *Realidad Económica*, N° 171, 2000, pp. 52-75.

The development of the productive forces of society through the increased socialization of private labor, that is to say, the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production, takes concrete shape in the negation of this self-same development through the mutilations that it necessarily carries out on the productive subjectivity of the whole of the laboring population. The concrete form in which the capitalist mode of production develops the productive forces of free labor is sufficient proof that this is not the ultimate social form taken by development. It is a specific historical modality that carries within itself the need for its own overcoming.

The transformation of the nature of labor and of the producer of commodities highlights the historical reason for the existence of the capitalist mode of production: the transformation of the productive powers of free individual labor into the productive powers of collective labor consciously organized by the same collective laborer that performs it, under the contradictory form of the development of social labor as private labor. This immanent contradiction of the capitalist mode of production is that which makes it bear in itself the need to supersede itself by engendering the general conscious organization of social production through its own development.

The centralization of capital as the alienated property of the working class

The advance in the socialization of private labor necessarily takes shape through the centralization of capital, i.e., the convergence of individual capitals in direct unity as the total capital of society. It is in the context of political action, which is to say, when it directly expresses the powers of social capital, that the working class embodies the direct socialization of private labor. The revolutionary action of the working class is the necessary concrete form in which the afore-mentioned constant revolution in the materiality of labor -which at the same time entails its direct socialization- develops its need for being organized as a directly social power that transcends the limits of its private capitalist form. Therefore, this revolutionary action is the necessary concrete form in which the capitalist mode of production fulfills its historical need to supersede itself through its own development.

The path is set by the working class taking into its own hands its alienated general social relation, i.e., the working class appropriating social capital. This is a task that can only be undertaken by centralizing capital as state property.¹⁵

The complete socialization of private labor, i.e., the absolute centralization of capital as the property of a global state, is the necessary course of the political action of the working class as the highest form of the development of the productive forces of society in the capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless, this is not its real end. Indeed, a process of capital accumulation where the complete fulfillment and control of the labor process were in the hands of the wage laborers and capital was the collective property of these same laborers under the necessary modality of state capital, would be the most developed form of the alienation of human powers as capital's powers. In it, the separation of the laborers from their means of production would be complete, which is to say that the laborers would be directly confronted with these means -that is, without needing to be mediated by the figure of the capitalist- as an objectified autonomous power not only alien to them but also one to which they would be complete subordinate.

The conscious, therefore free, organization of social life

¹⁵ Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ###

The private character of labor, plain and simple, means that the free consciousness that organizes each unit of social labor is deprived of the capacity to control its own social scope. This scope confronts it in an inverted form as the social power that its product -capital- imposes upon it to embody the general unity of social labor. Insofar as free consciousness necessarily personifies the social power belonging to its product, it is determined as an alienated consciousness.

In its complete development, the free consciousness bearer of alienation directly takes form in the materiality itself of the labor process. At this point, work materially consists in applying a scientific consciousness -i.e., one that is objectively aware of its own determinations and, as such, one that advances asserting its freedom- to develop control upon the natural forces in order to objectify them in machinery, namely, to multiply the capacity to organize the process of social metabolism. Nevertheless, that same product, i.e., the multiplied capacity for organization, confronts its producers under the specific social form of surplus value. That is, it confronts its producers as an alien social power that belongs to the material product of their labor and to which their objective consciousness itself is submitted. It is about an automatic organization of social life in which human labor consists in the development of the capacity to consciously control that very organization, simultaneously having as its immediate object the multiplication of the capacity to automatically organize social life beyond the consciousness of its producers.

The absolute limit to the capitalist development of the productive forces of society lies in this negation of the complete domination of the very powers of social labor. Therefore, the ultimate capitalist barrier to the development of productive forces lies in the mutilation imposed on free consciousness by its determination as the form of existence of alienated consciousness. The overcoming of this barrier necessarily entails the annihilation of private labor as the way of organizing social labor, thus giving birth to the general conscious organization of the latter.

This step forward in the development of productive forces thus takes a specific material concrete form. Namely, it takes the form of a social revolution in which the material subject of this development, i.e., the working class, does not limit itself to the annihilation of the bourgeoisie by transforming capital into an immediately social property. It annihilates capitalism itself, and, by doing so, annihilates the general political representative of capital, i.e., the state. Upon which the working class reaches its own end. The new general social relation takes shape in the consciousness and will by means of which the laborer directly determines him/herself as an individual organ of social labor. Total freedom is no longer limited to the absence of an individual's submission to the personal domination of another. It has developed as the complete objective consciousness concerning one's own individuality as the bearer of productive social powers. Therefore, it is about the general conscious organization of the process of producing social life. Free consciousness, i.e., free individuality, has become the general social relation¹⁶.

The historically specific revolutionary powers of the working class to overcome the capitalist mode of production do not arise from the realization of 'right', 'justice', or 'equality' as opposed to capitalist 'unnatural' injustice and exploitation;¹⁷ nor from the realization of the 'dialectics of ethnicity';¹⁸ nor from the 'increase of an internal self-

¹⁶ Marx, Karl, *Grundrisse*, Vol. 1, ###

¹⁷ Berstein, Eduard, *Socialismo teórico y socialismo práctico. Las premisas del socialismo y la misión de la social democracia*, Editorial Claridad, Buenos Aires, 1966, p. 157. Laclau, Ernesto y Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1985, pp. 180-181.

¹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen, *Conocimiento e interés*, Taurus Ediciones, Madrid, 1982, p. 67.

determination or self-morality’;¹⁹ nor from the fact that the mere antagonistic relationship that exists between the exploiters and the exploited in class struggle engenders an abstract accumulation of experience;²⁰ nor from the ‘autonomy’ achieved by class struggle with respect to its determination as the necessary concrete form of the socialization of private labor;²¹ nor from the ‘autonomy achieved by the working class’ consciousness with respect to capital, be this -in relative terms- by means of the production of a revolutionary ‘doctrine’,²² or by means of its ‘self-valorization’;²³ nor from the ‘democratization’ of capitalism through the apparent standoff between an abstractly free consciousness and an abstractly alienated consciousness by means of ‘market socialism’;²⁴ nor from the production of a working class consciousness able to develop itself by itself beyond the exhaustion of the development of productive forces;²⁵ nor from the need to avoid ‘barbarism’ vis-à-vis the mechanical impossibility of capital reproduction;²⁶ nor from this mechanical impossibility itself;²⁷ nor from the resistance of the laboring surplus population in its desperate struggle to survive.

Each of these reasons presupposes that working-class consciousness imposes itself -on its own account- upon the actual determination of the social being of the working class as an attribute of capital. Therefore, they are all idealistic inversions to which the materialistic point of view must be opposed. The capitalist mode of production is nothing but the form in which society develops its material productive forces by means of the accelerated socialization of free labor -i.e., by means of the generation and advance of the conscious organization of social labor performed by the direct producers themselves- by aiming for the multiplication of that socialization as the immediate object of social production and consumption. Therefore, this form of the organization of social production takes action directly aimed at reproducing the same mode of organization in a qualitatively and quantitatively expanded scale. Hence, its specific need to revolutionize the very materiality of the labor process, transforming it in the exercise of human faculties to submit natural forces to their conscious control exerted as a direct social power. Yet, for that reason too, the direct producers are presented with the product of their own social labor as an alien power that dominates them; i.e., as the very denial of their conscious organization of social labor, which is to say, as capital. Therefore, the capitalist mode of production constantly revolutionizes the materiality of the labor process in a way that entails the necessary overcoming of its own reproduction. Only because it is completely determined as an attribute of its own alienated material product, and as it cognizes itself completely in this determination as the necessary form of the advance in the conscious socialization of labor, the revolutionary action of the working class is today the complete expression of liberating action.²⁸

¹⁹ Mezaros, István, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin Press, London, 1986, pp. 188-189.

²⁰ Lukács, Georg, *Historia y conciencia de clase. Estudios de dialéctica marxista*, Editorial Grijalbo, México, 1969, p. 83.

²¹ Holloway, John, “The Great Bear: Post-Fordism and Class Struggle”, Werner Bonefeld y John Holloway (eds) *Post-Fordism & Social Form: A Marxist Debate on the Post-Fordist State*, Macmillan, London, 1991, p. 100.

²² Althusser, Louis, *La revolución teórica de Marx* (título original: *Pour Marx*), Siglo XXI Editores, Buenos Aires, 1968, pp. 142-181.

²³ Negri, Antonio, *Marx au-delà de Marx*, Christian Bourgois Éditeur, Paris, 1979, p. 182.

²⁴ Schweickart, David, *Against Capitalism*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1993. Roemer, John, *A Future for Socialism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1994.

²⁵ Trotsky, León, *El Programa de Transición*, Ediciones Política Obrera, Tigre, s/f, pp. 5, 7-8 y 42-44.

²⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa, *La acumulación de capital*, Editorial, Buenos Aires, 1968, pp. 332 y 384.

²⁷ Grossmann, Henryk, *La ley de la acumulación y del derrumbe del sistema capitalista*, Siglo XXI Editores, México, 1984, p. 121.

²⁸ Engels, Federico, *El Anti-Dühring*, Editorial Claridad, Buenos Aires, 1967, pp. 122-123.

The consciousness of the working class as the negation of the negation of free consciousness

The need inherent within the capitalist mode of production to develop itself towards its own overcoming into the general conscious organization of social production immediately presents us with the process of the development of consciousness. A consciousness able to organize the totality of the process of social production must have attained the power inherent in the fullness of objective knowledge, that is, it needs to be a completely free consciousness. Nevertheless, it can not reach this condition as an offspring of the previous overcoming of the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, this overcoming is the offspring of the complete development of free consciousness. Therefore, complete free consciousness must necessarily be the most genuine product of the capitalist mode of production itself. More concretely yet, it must needs be the product of the social subject that the capitalist mode of production objectively determines as the bearer of its own overcoming, resulting from the same process in which the subject undertakes this overcoming. In a nutshell, the consciousness in question can only be developed as the product of the political action of the working class in the process of overcoming the capitalist mode of production. This action takes, as its necessary concrete form, the advance in the socialization of private labor by means of the centralization of capital as an alienated social property, which is to say, as property of the state. The consciousness of the working class able to overcome the capitalist mode of production can only be developed as a concrete necessary moment of the aforementioned process of capital centralization.

Yet, the consciousness of the working class is determined as an attribute of capital and, therefore, as a form of alienated consciousness. Above all, the free consciousness of the working class is the necessary concrete form of its alienated consciousness. Hence, it is the negation of free consciousness under the appearance of being a free consciousness. Therefore, the consciousness that bears the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production cannot be developed as the abstract affirmation of the free consciousness of the working class. It can only be developed as the free consciousness of the working class that determines itself as an alienated consciousness advancing in the denial of its own alienation. That is, as a consciousness whose freedom resides in determining itself as the negation of the negation of free consciousness.

The science of capital as a pure form of the production of relative surplus value, i.e., the theoretical representation

Capital's needs concerning scientific cognition face a contradiction. To increase relative surplus value by means of the system of machinery, capital is compelled to submit all production and consumption to science. Nevertheless, insofar as scientific cognition is simply a concrete form of the production of surplus value, science must reproduce the alienation of human consciousness in capital. At the same time it has to be an objective consciousness, it needs to be a consciousness that looks upon itself in a non-objective way by accepting the appearance of being an abstractly free consciousness. For this reason, it is about a science that needs to appear as if the foundations of its objectivity were rooted outside itself. This foundation must appear to arise from a pure abstractly free subjectivity, as if it were based on

philosophy²⁹, and more specifically, on a philosophy based on the appearance of free individuality inherent in the circulation of commodities.³⁰

Scientific theory, namely logical representation, is this contradiction resolved. Scientific theory represents real concatenations by taking the forms where the necessity has been already realized needs have already been fulfilled -which is to say, the concrete forms- as if they were not, at the same time, forms that carry within themselves a necessity to be realized -which is to say, abstract forms. It thus defines real forms as unable to move by themselves. From this point of view, they can only be linked by an external relationship. It is here that logic comes into play.

Placed as incapable of moving by themselves, real forms are represented as forms that affirm themselves through the appearance of being abstract immediate affirmations. Consequently, consciousness could be affirmed as a free one or it could be affirmed as an alienated one. However, it is logically impossible for alienated consciousness to affirm itself through its own negation under the concrete form of free consciousness.

In fact, the appearance of immediate abstract affirmation corresponds to the actual quantitative determination considered in itself. Scientific theory subscribes to the logic that is genuinely necessary for mathematical cognition and represents it as the objective necessity that relates qualitatively the abstract immediate affirmations to which all real forms have been previously reduced. Mathematical logic is thus represented as formal logic. Based on this premise, scientific theory represents the real abstract determinations by the relationships of measure between their concrete forms. This representation allows the subject to govern actions upon real forms consciously: although the real necessity at stake is not truly known, it is nevertheless possible to act upon the magnitude of the real forms, thus transforming their quantity until this corresponds to that of a qualitatively different form. Its quality itself has thus been transformed.³¹

In turn, materialist dialectical logic takes the same abstract immediate affirmation as the simplest form of real existence.³² Its only difference is that it represents each of these affirmations as being necessarily united with another one of the same kind which appears as opposed to the former. Thus, the consciousness of the workers is represented as the unity of their free consciousness, on the one hand, and of their alienated consciousness on the other, within the constant struggle between them. Nevertheless, these poles are clearly mutually exclusive. The fact that their free consciousness is the concrete form of their alienated consciousness remains logically inadmissible.

Scientific method as ideology

Scientific theory revolutionizes once and again human control on natural forces, based on transforming quantitative differences into qualitative differences with objective knowledge. Its development seems to have no limit other than the conscious control over all the processes that concern human life. Therefore, scientific theory would appear to be the necessary form taken by the conscious organization of the human process of social metabolism. Yet, scientific theory itself has already discovered that this is like trying to walk through quicksand.

²⁹ Hempel, Carl, *La explicación científica: estudios sobre la filosofía de la ciencia*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1996, p. 220.

³⁰ Popper, Karl, "La lógica de las ciencias sociales", in Popper, K., T. Adorno, R. Dahendorf, J. Habermas, *La lógica de las ciencias sociales*, Grijalbo, México, 1978, p. 18.

³¹ Hegel, G. W. F., *Ciencia de la lógica*, Solar/Hachette, Buenos Aires, 1976, pp. 291-293.

³² Joja, Athanase, *La Lógica Dialéctica y las Ciencias*, Juárez Editor, Buenos Aires, 1969, p. 154.

As its initial premise is to represent real concrete forms as abstract immediate affirmations, the real necessity that determines them can only go into logical representation by being reduced to the greater or lesser degree that the repetition of the existence of the real concrete form in question could present.³³ Hence, scientific theory itself arrives at a logically unavoidable conclusion: given the external nature of logical representation with respect to the real needs that we aim to appropriate in thought, it is impossible to be certain about an objective knowledge before acting.³⁴ Therefore, scientific theories cannot go beyond interpreting reality in different ways.³⁵ They are but ideologies. However powerful an action based upon a theory may be in its mission to transform reality, it is in itself the denial of the action which thoroughly cognizes its own necessity beyond any appearance, insofar as it is based upon an interpretation. No wonder theoreticians themselves end up condemning scientific knowledge, as a consequence of its logical method itself, to the field of ‘exhausted utopias’, of ‘emancipating grand narratives;’³⁶ or, worse, to the field of the attempts of ‘totalitarian domination,’ aimed at oppressing human freedom.³⁷ This happens to the extent that the belief that the ideological determination of all scientific cognition must be taken for granted currently passes for the most unquestionable historically conscious criticism of its present general form.³⁸

The contradiction is obvious. Any interpretation of a real determination is in itself the denial of the knowledge of that determination that has transcended every appearance; the interpretation of one’s own need is the denial of its complete objective cognition. But the general conscious organization of social life entails that the objective knowledge held by each of the members of society about his/her determinations as such, transcending every appearance, becomes the general social relation. Therefore, as much as scientific cognition is condemned to interpretation, so the general conscious organization of social life is condemned to impossibility. In other words, as much as scientific theory is the final form of scientific cognition, so socialism/communism is condemned to impossibility. Even the most blatantly apologetic cretinism of capitalism has nothing further to request: from the mouths of the true representatives of scientific method comes the utterance that this very same method declares that ‘the end of history’ has been reached, that ‘the future is already here.’

In addition, as scientific knowledge has been reduced to an ideological conception whose specificity lies in its repressive and authoritarian power, antiscientific irrationality and fragmented sight begin to earn praise as the liberating resistance that ‘desire’ opposes to oppressing knowledge³⁹. Theoretical representation opposes the very denial of totally free action -i.e., the free interpretation of reality⁴⁰- to the transforming power of totally free action -i.e., of the action that is aware of its own determinations beyond any appearance- as the consummation of human freedom. In scientific theory, ideology manifests itself in the form of its opposite, namely, scientific method.

³³ Hempel, Carl, *op. cit.*, pp. 233 y 255.

³⁴ Popper, Karl, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁵ Habermas, Jürgen, “Teoría analítica de la ciencia y la dialéctica” en Popper, Karl, Theodor Adorno, Ralf Dahrendorf y Jürgen Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³⁶ Lyotard, Jean-François, *La condición postmoderna*, Editorial REI, Buenos Aires, 1989, pp. 73 y 76-77.

³⁷ Durand, Jean Pierre, “Can we make our own history? The significance of dialectic today”, *Capital & Class*, 62, 1997, pp. 143-158.

³⁸ Adorno, Theodor, “Sobre la lógica de las ciencias sociales”, en Popper, K, T. Adorno, R. Dahendorf, J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

³⁹ Foucault, Michel, *La arqueología del saber: las ciencias humanas en la episteme moderna*, Siglo XXI, México, 1997, p. 23.

⁴⁰ Rorty, Richard, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p. 208.

The reproduction of the concrete in thought, i.e. dialectical cognition

The critique of scientific theory has no way of taking shape in the formulation of a new logical paradigm. In other words, the critique of the current universally dominant science does not take shape in the construction of a new theory, but in the production of a new form of objective cognition that supersedes scientific theory itself. Thus, it is not about conceiving a new representation of reality, condemned by its sole condition as a form of representation to follow a constructive necessity alien to the real one, to follow a logic.

What is to be done then? There is only one step possible: we must face the issue itself of 'what is it to be done' in a radical way; that is to say, we must start by submitting to criticism the determinations of our own transforming action from its very roots, from the determination of our social being, putting everything into question.

The production of the scientific consciousness of the working class concerning its own historic potential is not a mere scientific matter. It is a necessary specific moment of the political action of the working class within in class struggle. As long as the scientific consciousness of the working class remains the prisoner of the same method that operates as the scientific consciousness of the simple production of relative surplus value -namely, of logical representation- it lacks the capacity to uncover that, in the capitalist mode of production, freedom is the concrete form of alienation. Certainly, the working class makes its revolutionary advances based on this consciousness in the process of centralizing capital as a direct social property. Moreover, insofar as this advance necessarily entails the advance in its liberation from the rule of the bourgeoisie, it appears to be the practical confirmation that the theories it uses to rule its action are the product of a purely free consciousness. Nevertheless, the same production of relative surplus value forces forward the continued development of conscious control on social labor. This drives the conscious action of the working class towards overcoming any limitation that could be imposed on that control by stopping short at an appearance. Sooner or later in this process, the working class finds out that it is impossible to continue advancing without uncovering its own free consciousness as the necessary concrete form of its alienation as an attribute of capital. It can only take this step by appropriating its own determination which it achieves by reproducing their necessity in thought. That is, when its action concerning the conscious organization of social labor needs to leave behind it the exteriority of logical representation to govern itself through the reproduction of the concrete in thought.

At the point when we intend to appropriate in thought the necessity of our action, we are faced with the object of this action as it actually is for us in that moment: something external. We therefore are faced with our object in its immediate exteriority. We overcome the appearance of this immediate exteriority as we advance through the abstract forms of our object. The analysis pertinent to scientific theory separates the abstract forms according to their degree of repetition, therefore stopping at their exteriority. On the contrary, the analysis that is going to support the reproduction of the real necessity in thought separates the concrete form that we face from the necessity that it carries within itself as the other-one whose realization determines it. That is to say, it takes shape by discovering the abstract form (and as such, a necessity to be realized) within its concrete form (and as such, a necessity already realized). Given this form, the analysis cannot cease until it reaches the real form that does not carry in itself an other-one from which its necessity arises, but which is, by itself and not by an other-self, the need to negate itself as abstract existence in order to affirm itself as concrete existence. That is to say, until we face matter simply as such.

The return towards the concrete forms following the analysis that has come to a halt in the externality of the abstract forms unavoidably takes shape in the addition of the non-

repeating -and consequently previously excluded- forms to the representation. This process lacks any necessity to follow other than the purely constructive one dictated by its logic. Hence, the inevitable externality of its result with regard to the real necessity that the action aims to realize. On the contrary, the reproduction of reality in thought advances by following the development of the necessity that the simplest abstract form carries within itself. As soon as this abstract form realizes its necessity, i.e., it affirms itself as an abstract form, it negates itself as such an abstract form in order to affirm itself as a realized necessity, i.e., as a concrete form. But this concrete form immediately negates itself as such, by affirming itself as a form that carries in itself a necessity to be realized, i.e., as a new abstract form. Thus, we follow in thought our real object as it unfolds its development. This reproduction of the development of real necessity by means of thought is unable to get to its end before reaching a form whose necessity as a potent power takes our transforming action -determined as an action that has needed to follow this path all along in order to become a conscious action- as its necessary form of realizing itself. That is, the reproduction in question is unable to get to its end until our action can discover its own concrete form as a conscious action, i.e., can discover itself, as the necessary concrete form of the realization of the real potential at stake. Due to the form of its method the ideal reproduction of reality is determined as dialectical cognition.

Science, i.e., the production of the objective consciousness, is thus carried out in a concrete form that immediately corresponds to its content: it has no room for necessities other than those purely inherent to its object. Therefore, when it is developed by the alienated subject, it unavoidably faces the latter with the evidence of his/her own alienation, whichever the appearance of abstract free subjectivity he/she has started from. Hence, the development of scientific cognition as the way of governing the transformation of present society into that of freely associated individuals is the critique of scientific theory.

The science of capital as the pure form of annihilating itself, namely, the science of the working class

Since it begins, unavoidably, by discovering its own historical condition as an alienated consciousness, dialectical consciousness can only be a product of capital inasmuch as the latter needs to annihilate itself through the conscious general organization of the social metabolism. Therefore, dialectical cognition as practical criticism can only arise as the immediate expression of the general interests of the working class; namely, as the expression of the latter's power to abolish itself as a class by constituting the society of freely associated individuals. Only inasmuch as it expresses this necessity is dialectical cognition able to advance upon the immediate concrete forms of the political organization of privately-performed social labor and of the transformation of natural forces into human instruments. Nevertheless, when it does so, it brings to these fields the revolutionary powers it obtains from its very historical reason of existence.

Given its primary determination, the production of dialectical consciousness initially has to take the form of a political action of the working class immediately aimed at this self-same production. Hence -from the viewpoint of capital ideologists, obliged to conceive of any form of scientific production as a process of logical representation- the production of dialectical consciousness seems to begin as a process of abstract theoretical production. Nevertheless, dialectical consciousness can only count on a single object in order to advance, even to take the first step in its development, namely, the action of the working class in its struggle against the capitalist class in order to express the immediate necessities of social capital. Therefore, the concrete object from which the development of dialectical

consciousness must needs start in order to produce itself, makes this same immediate end inseparable from the true end of dialectical consciousness in present-day society: the general conscious organization of the action of the working class in the class struggle through which the capitalist mode of production annihilates itself in its own development. Far from being an abstract theoretical production, the production of dialectical consciousness, i.e., the conscious organization of one's action by reproducing its necessity in thought, is always, given the unity of its form and content, a product of the concrete political practices of the working class. Therefore, its production necessarily takes the form of a practical criticism.

Marx's *Capital* is in itself the development -performed for the first time and objectified in a way that enables its social reproduction- of the alienated consciousness of the working class that produces itself as an alienated consciousness aware of its own alienation and of the historical powers it derives from it. In *Capital*, this consciousness develops to the point where it reaches its general determinations concerning the revolutionary action of the working class in which the historical powers in question realize themselves, thus producing the material conditions for the conscious -therefore, free- organization of social life.

As a concrete form of the general social relation, the conscious organization of social life performed by dialectical cognition is necessarily a task for the collective laborer who is politically delimited by the advance in the transformation of his/her environment into a means for him/herself based on this same organization. This collective laborer only affirms him/herself in his/her unity as such with respect to the process of knowledge as long as all of those members in the collective process reproduce the whole of the necessity of each one's share in the collective action that, as such a member, he/she is going to perform. Consequently, there is no way for the collective laborer to include within itself the separation between the organization and the fulfillment -in a restricted sense- of each action; in other words, there is no way for the collective laborer to include within itself the separation between the knowledge of the necessity of the action and the execution of the action itself. In brief, the action governed by the form of dialectical cognition is the actual abolition of the separation between intellectual labor and manual labor.

Today, the action governed by dialectical cognition is a necessary concrete form of capital. In turn, capital is the very denial of the consciously organized process of social metabolism. Nevertheless, because of its mere objective form, dialectical cognition embodies, as its own necessity, that same necessity inherent in the process of consciously organized social metabolism: the necessity of being the product of freely associated individuals. Though, in the capitalist mode of production, individuals lack any way to become actually free other than by having an alienated consciousness that negates its own alienation; i.e., as the negation of the negation of their freedom. Even as the form of dialectical cognition necessarily determines the social subject able to develop it as an alienated subject which, due to its awareness of its own alienation is therefore free, this cognition makes evident that it is only a power of capital insofar as it bears its own annihilation through the development of the material conditions for the general conscious organization of society as a historical necessity. Only because it is thus determined by its specific form of reproduction in thought of reality as a class product, as the science of the working class, does scientific cognition free itself from any ideological determination.

The Center for Research as Practical Criticism (CICP)

The political organization able to develop the science of the working class today

The advance in the production of the alienated consciousness that recognizes itself in its alienation is the concrete political task of the working class that expresses its general

historical interests. Moreover, this production is, in itself, the process of the determination of the forms that correspond to the organization of the political party of the working class that directly bears the power of the capitalist mode of production to overcome itself. Nevertheless, the current development of the productive forces of society is far from having reached the point from which it could only advance by taking the material form of the political action of the working class ruled by a consciousness that has revealed any kind of appearance concerning its own determination. Today, none of the existing parties of the working class - ranging from the social democrats to those that define themselves as revolutionary parties- aim to seize state power as the expression of an alienated consciousness that recognizes itself as such. On the contrary, all of them face this advance as the action of a wholly free working-class consciousness. And it is from this consciousness -which is abstractly free with respect to capital- that they see themselves acquiring the power needed to overcome the capitalist mode of production.

Given these conditions, the first thing that the action of the working class ruled by a consciousness aware of its own alienation needs to discover concerning its own determination, is that the development of the productive forces of society has not yet reached the point at which this form of consciousness would necessarily become the direct way of organizing the seizure of state power. Therefore, today, the organization of the political party of the working class based on the consciousness in question needs to take shape through an independent organization that places the advance itself in the collective production of that consciousness as the objective of its immediate political action. The CIGP has enrolled itself in this collective political action.