

THE INDIVIDUAL AS FORM OF EXISTENCE OF HUMANKIND

INTRODUCTION: What is the problem?

In 1945, as soon as WWII was over, Ralph Linton, in his introduction to a series of articles aimed at assessing the general situation of the human sciences (“The Scope and Aim of Anthropology”), made the following remark: Until very recent times, ethnologists “have regarded the individual as a mere culture carrier, one of a series of identical and interchangeable units. ... Personality psychology has followed a somewhat similar course in its development. It concentrated upon the individual and at first, under the influence of the natural sciences, tried to explain all individual similarities and differences on a physiological basis. Although the importance of environment in personality formation soon became apparent, this was used, at first, simply to explain individual differences.” (1945: 13) In short, according to Linton, be it for the ethnologist, or for the personality psychologist the individual had no originality: a simple cultural unit for the first, a simple biological unit for the latter.

It was this observation that prompted some anthropologists, starting with Linton, to embark on research aimed at uncovering the kind of individual character (the “basic personality”) required by each specific culture. Abram Kardiner who initiated ground breaking research in this field (“The Concept of Basic Personality Structure as an Operational Tool in the Social Sciences,” in the same collection of articles) used the myths, the traditions, the religious beliefs, the widespread world view and the action modes expressing it, of a definite society, in order to establish the basic personality which would be functional for this society. What is more important, he tried to single out specific methods used for the inculcation of the basic personality to the newly born individuals. Thus, he examined the breast feeding habits, the length of time spent by the mother with her children, the specificities of their relation, toilet training age and means, the position of the father, the degree of authoritarianism in child training and many other variables in order to determine their functionality in the building of the basic personality. Through this he found the opportunity to carry over into anthropology many concepts developed initially by psychoanalysis.¹ He paved the way for many colleagues, among whom Erik Erikson was the most prominent. Starting with Freud’s character formation stages, specially the oral, anal, and genital stages considered as being the most instrumental up to the age of five, Erikson divided the totality of an individual existence into eight main stages (“Eight Ages of Man”), and endeavored to establish the defining action patterns, the main psychological challenges, and the major social virtues attached to each phase. Thus, he initiated a path of research aimed at discovering in each specific culture the concrete methods used to promote the action patterns, to meet the psychological challenges, and to develop the social virtues attached to each stage of an individual’s development. In order to pinpoint these concrete methods he scrutinized the way of life of two American Indian tribes. (1950)

This attempt at building bridges between the social and the individual is paralleled by bridge building tentatives between biology and psychology. In fact, the view according to which the soul is determined by the body is ages old. The still widespread classification of

¹ The following statement is a fine example of the utilization of psychoanalytic concepts in anthropology: “Were it not for the fact that there is a basic personality among ... [our] people, we could never identify such specific constellations as Oedipus complex, castration complex, and so on, which were made so noteworthy by Freud. Freud, however, did not know that these constellations, which were so universal in the people, in our society, were specific to our culture.” (Kardiner, *in* Linton, 1945: 114)

main characters, as the sanguine, the melancholic, the choleric, and the phlegmatic spans back to Hippocrates.² The most well-known psychological theory, Freud's psychoanalysis, looks at the body to find the sources and effects of psychological reality. The libido is rooted in our biology and seeking to release its energy is the main determinant of our actions. Social barriers erected against this unconscious soothing need, create not only psychological, but also biological disturbances and deranged behavior.

Some of the sciences of which the object is the human, mainly fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, etc., preferably use social variables to explain the laws of their particular field. In contrast, sciences like psychology, psychoanalysis and behaviorism, place the main emphasis on individual factors. Sciences stressing the individual as against the social are themselves divided into two subsets: those favoring biological explanations and those favoring psychological ones. To sum up the situation in the human sciences, these sciences can be categorized within three broad classes: those favoring culture, those favoring the psyche, and finally, those favoring biology, as their main explanatory variable.

As indicated above, as early as 1945 Ralph Linton urged those supporting alternative approaches to lend an ear to each other, and he himself was a pioneer of this convergence. In time, this approach was generalized. The anthropologists and/or ethnologists started to utilize individual factors in their explanation of the disintegration of rigid or closed cultural systems. At the same juncture, psychologists of different areas of expertise, character theoreticians and others, started to acknowledge the role played by the social environment, by the cultural constraints in the conditioning or the learning processes of the individual. Finally, the characterization of nearly all human diseases as "psycho-somatic" is a trivial common view nowadays.

The end result of all these bridge building efforts, of all this multi-disciplinarity, has been the definition of humankind as a "bio-psycho-social" being. But is this really a solution? Can we consider this definition a satisfactory reply to a truly scientific query? My answer to this question is a categorical "no". That the human being has cultural, psychological, or biological properties is common knowledge since at least Antiquity. Any theory, in order to be scientific, must be able to account for the three clusters of the human being's properties, by using one and only one of the three components as the truly explanatory factor. This is not to say that we must discard or ignore the other two clusters. But, a theory of humankind must be able to explain the other two components, or at least, to make room for their specificity, within the frame of a homogenous theory and not a theoretical patchwork.

In a sense, this necessity has been recognized a long time ago. The very fact of the criticism applied since more than a half century to the one-sidedness of the different theories of the human, is in fact a tribute paid to their scientificity. What is or should be criticized is not their privileging of a single explanatory factor; it is instead their choosing the wrong factor and their inability to present a coherent explanation of the nature of the three main clusters of human properties.

The main stumbling block in theory building in the human sciences is the colossal difficulty of overcoming the individual-social dichotomy in a truly scientific manner. There are only two paths which can be taken to achieve this. The first would be to build a theory with a concept of fluidity, leaving no room to the individual-social dichotomy right from the start. This is not easy matter as Geoffrey Samuel's tentative, in his *Mind, Body and Culture* (1990) edifyingly exhibits. In an approach labeled "multimodal framework", the author presents the concept of the "modal state" as covering both the individual and the social, and he maintains that these hybrid entities develop as "modal currents". The effort to bridge the

² Empedocles explained everything with the movement of the four basic components of the universe: air, earth, fire, and water. Hippocrates' character classification followed the same pattern: air for the sanguine, earth for the melancholic, fire for the choleric, and water for the phlegmatic. (Allport, 1961: 37)

individual-social gap is indeed praiseworthy. But, unfortunately, a courageous innovative terminology is not enough for overcoming stubborn realities. The only possible alternative approach is to frankly acknowledge the individual and social aspects of human reality and try to build a theory which explains the dichotomy and allows us to overcome it in a scientific manner.

In recent times two theoretical attempts at bringing together the individual and the social have gained a large audience. One belongs to Anthony Giddens and the other was developed by Pierre Bourdieu.³

Giddens' views can be summarized as follows:⁴ Individuals acting in any social field always face more or less binding rules and have at their disposition this or that kind of resources. Rules are the skeletons of social systems. Institutions are the most established and thus the most binding of these systems. Resources are mainly of two kinds: those giving power over things (economic power), and those giving power over persons (political power). Individuals, already molded by definite habits perform different acts, in different social fields, follow their conscious preferences. These acts are determined by the social systems, as much as they determine these systems. Besides, sets of social relations can come into existence and endure only through the actions of individuals. The direction and intensity of these actions are random. It is thus impossible to predict the future course that society will take. As can be seen from this very cursory summary, Giddens makes every effort to keep together the individual and the social. Even so, he cannot eschew positing on one side the individual, and on the other side the context (social structures and resources) within which the individual acts. His individual, even previously molded by habits, is an independent being capable of consciously using the social systems and resources.

It is precisely for the purpose of evading this impasse that Bourdieu put forth the concept of "habitus." (1994) Habitus is the term used to signify the main tendencies of the individual as fashioned by the social. Bourdieu's individual enters social relations with her main tendencies previously determined. The social field is a complex structure composed of subfields compounded around various economic, political, cultural centers of power. The positions adopted by the individual within these relations are largely determined by her habitus, shaped itself by the social environment, within which the individual was raised. Social change is the result of conflicting acts provoked by diverse habituses in various social subfields. Social change has neither law nor settled direction. As can be easily seen, Bourdieu's great contribution is the transference of the social into the individual. But, his social theory being rather weak, he is unable to provide a satisfactory account for the formation and development of the individual-social couple.

The aim of the present article is to explore what kind of solution Marxism⁵ can offer to the individual-social problematic. This exploration will be conducted in two parts. In the first part the historical materialist approach to the individual-social couple will be investigated. The purpose of the second part is to seek out how different meaningful solutions proposed for the overcoming of the individual-social dichotomy can be integrated into historical materialism.

³ Lucien Sève's theory was another serious attempt in the same direction; but it did not attract as much attention as the two others. Sève's theory will be shortly discussed in the second part of this article.

⁴ Giddens' main work is entitled *Sociology*; it was totally revised and updated in 1993. But as it is difficult to single Giddens' own views out from this comprehensive survey, I preferred to use Giddens (1984).

⁵ The term "Marxism" is currently used in three different meanings, creating thus a very unfortunate confusion. In its first meaning it denotes a certain philosophy. In this sense it is better to replace it with the term "dialectical materialism." In its second meaning, Marxism is the name of a definite social science. To avoid the oddity of denoting a science with an -ism, it is definitely advisable to replace it with "historical materialism". The appellation of Marxism is solely convenient for its third meaning. In this last sense Marxism is the name given to the working class' ideology.

PART I: The historical materialist solution

The main course adopted by historical materialism in order to explain the relations of the individual and the social is to stress the dialectical unity of all the dichotomies established by the metaphysical point of view.⁶ Thus, dichotomies like subject-object, agent-structure, cause-effect, necessity-contingency, rule-exception, law-hazard, external-internal, determinate-indeterminate and so on, rigidly disconnected by the metaphysical view, are treated as opposite poles of an identical reality by the dialectical approach.

In the beginning of the *Grundrisse* Marx uses this approach in his analysis of the production-consumption couple. His analysis proceeds on three levels. At the first level, production and consumption are identical. They are just two facets of the same reality. Production is consumption, consumption is production. Thus, a person who eats consumes food and reproduces oneself in the same act. At the second level, there is no direct identity anymore. The two poles are separated and they are viewed as a means for each other. Production creates the object of consumption. Consumption determines the object of production. Thus, a farmer grows a plant destined to be consumed as food. In return, the consumer eating a definite product indicates to the farmer which plant to cultivate. The two poles thus separated, are again united at the third level. But, this new identification is far from being direct. It has to go through a series of mediations. At this level, each pole realizes itself finally by becoming the other. Thus, a product becomes a product in the full sense the term implies when it is consumed. It is consumption that finalizes production. It is again consumption which creates the need for production. On the other hand, it is production which determines what is to be consumed and how. It is also production which creates new needs in the consumer. In short, at the third level the processes of identification are finally realized.

This approach deserves to be fully comprehended in all its implications. It is not only a clever set of observations; it is a specific guide for scientific investigation. This way of thinking, starting with the spotting of a contradictory identity, continuing with the splitting of the identity in order to pinpoint the nature of the opposite poles, and then, proceeding to find out all the details of their reunification through a series of mediations, is truly fruitful. It enables not only a minute exploration of the contradictory sides of the object under study with a view to determine their specific nature, but much more importantly, it continuously reminds us that we are dealing with an identity. Returning to the example given above, it is only through keeping in mind the basic identity of production and consumption that we are driven to ask why, in a specific mode of production, these two poles of the same identity have to go through the mediations of exchange and circulation, in order to be able to reach each other. And this line of questioning takes us necessarily to a study of the mediations involved. Historical materialism uses basically the same approach in its analysis of different modes of production. Any production necessitates the combination of producers with means of production. But, except in very primitive societies, this coming together is never immediate. What determines the mode of this combination is the property regime of the society in question. For example in the case of the capitalist mode of production, the private property of the means of production and especially, the transformation of the working capacity into a good sold on the market by the producer, make up for the specificity of capitalism, where production and consumption are compelled to go through the mediation of markets.

In short, historical materialism provides us with a very rich general method for studying all kinds of social objects. It is thus highly advisable to use this guide to explore

⁶ “Metaphysical,” not in the usual sense, but in Hegel’s terminology where it means a philosophical stance privileging uniformity and fixity, against the dialectical approach which favors creative contradiction and transformation.

what it can contribute to the solving of the individual-social dilemma. At the first level of the dialectical identity between the individual and society, their direct sameness is obvious. In no situation ever has there been an individual without a society or a society without individuals. A society is always an aggregation of individuals. At the second level, the instrumental level, society is the means of realization of the individual, and the individual is the means of realization of society. The individual can exist as a human being only if she is born as part of a society; society can survive only if its members are perpetually renewed. At the third, the totally mediated level, there is a complete reciprocal determination. The individual's human nature is fully shaped by her society, whereas the nature of a society depends entirely upon the nature of its members.

These different levels of the dialectical identity⁷ of the individual and society furnish historical materialism with a very precious methodological guide. The first level gives us, right from the outset, a series of warnings. A social science ignoring the individual, or a science of the individual ignoring society, have to be rejected as non-scientific. Even the simplest object of investigation must include both the individual and the social. Thus, all kinds of Robinsonian approaches as well as all laboratory research starting with an individual stripped of sociality must be discarded. As, in the same vein, all social science approaches which do not see that there cannot be social life without individual action must also be rejected. This enables us to see immediately the basic flaws of theories for which the individual enters social relations as a completely independent agent, or any brand of extreme structuralism for which individuals are interchangeable bearers of already fixed sets of social relationships. Again, even this first level warns us against widespread parlance. It is for example simply wrong to say that an individual is born within a society, because the arrival of the new individual inevitably transforms society. Strictly speaking, with every individual death society itself dies, and with every individual birth a new society comes into existence. Another pitfall to eschew is to view the socialization process as a unique path an individual follows in order to become a full member of a society. In fact, every socialization is simultaneously an individualization. Without this double-faceted happening, no society could exist, change or develop.

As indicated above, the second level of analysis requires an analytic division between the individual and the social, with a view to find out why they should be instrumental in their reciprocal realization. This amounts to an effort to define the human. For Marx, what defines humankind as a species is the practice to satisfy the needs of its individuals through a web of social relations. In the beginning, humans-to-be and their animal relatives have more or less the same needs. Material needs that must be satisfied if the species is to survive. Humanization starts with the satisfaction of these needs through a socially organized production process, even if in the beginning this reduces to a simple collecting and sharing. In the first chapter of *The German Ideology*,⁸ written in 1845-46, at the outset of the elaboration of historical materialism, Marx and Engels furnish us with the following characterization of humankind: "Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life."

⁷ Hegelian dialectics is not a hangover for "Marxism". Marx would not be Marx without it. Obviously, dialectics is not a scientific method in any narrow sense. It is a broad outlook, a source of awareness, a general scientific guide. It shows one the way in pinpointing the problem and where to search for the solutions. True, it is far from being indispensable for scientific research. But undoubtably, it is a very helpful instrument, when used properly.

⁸ The chapter on Feuerbach, section "A. Idealism and Materialism: First Premises of Materialist Method."

At some point in the many millions years of evolution up to the present day orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and humans, a break occurs: among some animals, the cultural transmission of social production skills starts to take precedence over biological inheritance. With this new trend, social evolution overtakes biological evolution. Humanization is not the direct result of any biological ripening. Of course, biology has to permit social evolution. But once this threshold is attained social evolution takes the lead. From then on, even our biological evolution is directed by our social development. This point is crucial for historical materialism. Humankind is not just another kind of animal. It is a social species, and it is unique. Defining the humans as animals having this or that property, for instance as ‘producing animals’, does not make sense. It is similar to defining animals as moving plants. The difference between animals and humans is no less profound than the difference between plants and animals. Humankind is a social being, actually the only social being. This is exclusively what defines it.

The emergence of humankind as a new species made an immense impact on the world. The fact that humankind can only survive by continually transforming its environment as well as itself, led to huge consequences. Today the vast majority of plants that we see growing around us come from seeds transformed by humans themselves in the course of their evolution. The original flora has almost disappeared. What is termed natural flora nowadays is to a very large extent a human product. The much trumpeted question of genetically modified products is nothing else in fact than the last twist taken by a human undertaking lasting thousands of years. The same is true, even to a greater degree, of all fauna. Wild life is almost completely extinguished. Species under protection in zoos, inevitably lose their originality within a very short span of time. Our earth is covered by the domesticated, which is to say by animals reformed by humankind. Cloning animals or modifying their genes is, as in the case of plants, the last phase of a long millenary development. In short, the natural environment of humankind is its own product. Nature is part and parcel of social structures.

Humans’ nature is also a social product. As indicated above, biological evolution itself has been oriented by social needs. The means used for survival, the development of hunting methods, the evolution of eating habits and the like are the main determinants in the development of the hands, the brain, the throat etc. Of course, accidental mutations are always at the origin of a new biological trait. But, in the case of humans, what natural selection favors and thus perpetuates is determined by social factors. In humankind, the natural environment is society. Natural selection is social selection. The human genome differs only very slightly from the chimpanzees’. This tiny difference accounts for humans’ originality. The determinants of this difference are diverse processes of social life. The fact that this difference is so small provides ample proof for the view that what defines the human is not its biology. Besides, the role of social life does not stop at the determination of the biology of the human as species. The neurons of every individual undergo a continuous process of interconnection, starting in the mother’s womb, proceeding very rapidly in the first years, varying later according to the richness of the individual’s experience, and terminating only with death. All habits imbedded in the life of an individual, everything she learns, are realized through this endless process of inter-neuronal connections. In other words, not only the human in the human species, but also all individuals’ neuronal networks are shaped by social experience. Social life is embedded within individuals’ bodies. It is evident that, this is even more valid when it comes to the individuals’ souls. Our unconscious, our emotions, our thoughts are always social. And lastly, society itself is a social product. In the process of reshaping nature, of socially determining its biological evolution, in the social formation of all its individuals, humankind has also perpetually reshaped its own social life. The general crisis that we are experiencing today -the rapid degradation of the environment, the dramatic effects of climate change, the many-sidedness of a social crisis which relentlessly creates all sorts and kinds of

new threats, the increasingly maddening social life engulfing the individual- are only evidences of the acceleration in the use of the transforming powers of humankind.

In brief, the second level of analysis of the dialectical identity between the individual and society, allows historical materialism to define the human as a double-faceted reality, where each face is instrumental in the existence of the other. But of course this is not enough. The third level of analysis still remains to be studied. The task then becomes to explore how, through which mediations, the individual becomes society, and reciprocally, society becomes the individual. This theory is to be built. As an initial tentative approach I propose the use of some widespread concepts like role/structure, active/passive determination, and the transformation of quantity into quality. It seems that these are the most basic tools that historical materialism must use in its endeavor to contribute to the elaboration of the theory of the social-individual. Another crucial step to be taken is to consider what others have to say on this question. This will be the subject of the second part of this article. It is only through a critical integration of different approaches within its own thinking that historical materialism can have a chance of making a meaningful contribution to such an encompassing theory.

The concepts of role and structure are widely used by different approaches within social sciences. In the eyes of all approaches roles are patterns of behavior viewed as a norm for individuals placed in definite social situations. The patterns are never totally rigid. Even so, they have an undeniable impact. A certain behavior is always considered fundamentally incompatible with a certain role. For instance, in no case may a teacher use his/her position to abuse a pupil, in no case may a soldier sell his services to the enemy. A structure is a cluster of interconnected roles, the combinations of which constitute a pattern of action that again is considered as the norm within a definite society. The rigidity of these structures varies widely, from more or less loose encounters to secular and thus almost untouchable institutions.

So far, there is a broad consensus among the different theoretical approaches using these conceptual tools. But when it comes to the integration of these tools within a specific theory, each approach needs to redefine these concepts according to its theoretical requisites. The same necessity holds for historical materialism.⁹ For the structuralists, roles and structures have an independent existence. They are there and wait to be filled by individuals. Whereas, for historical materialism, roles and structures can only exist through the behavior of definite individuals. Individuals are active agents capable of modifying their environment to some extent. But they are under constraint. These constraints are not exterior to them. They are already imprinted within them. Having isolated the individuals from the social roles and structures, the structuralists are unable to explain social change. With its conception of roles and structures as always embedded within definite individuals, historical materialism never confronts this problem. The individualistic approaches, on the other hand, very easily conceptualize this active individual intervention. They do not have any difficulty in explaining social change as they see the individual as a free agent. But, this conception of the individual as independent from society precludes them from giving any satisfactory explanation for the direction taken by social change. Whereas for historical materialism, the individual as an active agent is always previously determined by society. Her freedom is always limited by the social constraints already imprinted in her. The individual active agent cannot simply act according to her free will. She also necessarily reflects the constraints enshrined in her. As Marx and Engels put it, again in *The German Ideology*: "The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter these definite social and political relations."¹⁰ As can be readily seen, the originality of historical

⁹ I had already tried to redefine these concepts from the historical materialism's point of view in my *Essay on the Nature of the State* (1981: 11-13, 171-173).

¹⁰ Again, the chapter on Feuerbach, section "A. Idealism and Materialism: 4. The Essence of the Materialist Conception of History, Social Being and Social Consciousness."

materialism is to consider all the variables of social action as already determined: “Definite” individuals enter “definite” social and political relations in a “definite” way. This is not to say that individuals are mere pawns playing at the game of social forces. This would be nonsensical in the frame of the individual-society dialectical unity explained above. It only means that individual freedom is not just random and limitless.

In historical materialism’s conception, roles and structures are composed of very different elements. To start with, all necessarily have a subject. This determined individual is the active element of all roles and therefore structures. We will see soon that the subject herself is always a definite structure. Among social tools used by the individual some may be a source of energy. But what brings social movement to any means or tool, be it found in nature or produced by humankind, is always individual energy. This point is crucial in understanding historical materialism. What is called social energy is always and without exception the adding up of individual energies. The social motor is invariably moved by individual forces. So in all roles and structures we find active individuals furnishing the energy needed for playing the roles and keeping the structures alive. All roles and structures offer a series of material and spiritual resources, such as various tools, knowledge, beliefs, a definite language, etc., to this active subject. Some are already incorporated within the subject, some are not. Anthropologists call this totality of means culture. Historical materialism agrees with this definition only if individuals and culture are not taken as two independent variables. For historical materialism culture is largely embedded within individuals. A cultural means which is not being used by an individual is only a potentiality. Socially it is a dead thing. Social life is infused in any material or spiritual means only through its use by individuals. While determined by their social past and their social environment, individuals incessantly reshape the cultural means that they make use of. And this reshaping inevitably determines the mode of action of the individual who will next use the same means. Thus a chain of determination and relative freedom, the degree of determination and undetermination varying according to the subject, the object, the epoch, the circumstances and the like comes into being.

At this juncture one must also consider the concept of determination as understood by historical materialism.¹¹ Determinism means causing something to happen or impeding its happening, or affect the form it will take if it is going to happen. It is clear that there are many kinds of determinism. Begetting, destroying, shaping, spoiling, derailing, provoking, prompting, stimulating, exciting, holding, limiting, conditioning, etc., are all forms of determination. It is my opinion that for historical materialism, the most fruitful way of making use of the determination concept is to limit it to two main meanings: active determination and passive determination. Active determination signifies causing something to come into existence. For example, if you invite a friend to an outing and you receive an affirmative reply, your outing is the direct outcome of your invitation. You have actively determined it. It would not happen without your invitation. Passive determination, on the other hand, is what limits the possibilities. In line with the previously given example, your outing can take the form of a simple walk, a bicycle ride, cruising in your car or a boat trip, depending on the means at hand. If you are far away from any coast or if it is impossible to get a boat, the alternative to board a boat does not exist for you. If you have opted for getting around in a car, the legal speed limit or let’s say the occurrence of a traffic jam will inevitably influence your outing. It will not cause it, but it will shape it. As another example, let’s imagine that someone decides to become a basketball player. What actively determines this decision may be a previously acquired urge, the call of a beloved friend, the advice of a respected teacher, the command of a family member, the hope of getting a scholarship and so on and so forth. The

¹¹ In my *Essay on the Nature of the State* I also discussed historical materialism’s understanding of the concept of determination. (1981: 14-18, 92-96, 132-136, 172-174).

height of the individual, her physical condition, the opportunities to find a coach, the pecuniary means needed, the difficulties in sparing enough time for training, the availability of a basketball team willing to accept the individual in question, are all passive determinants. As can be deduced, for any human action, there is always one or more active determinant and a series of passive determinants. It is not at all difficult to spot these determinations. What brings about an action is its active determinant. What limits the possibilities of that action, what sets the range of the forms of its realization, the conditions that facilitate or on the contrary constrict it; in short the setting of the action provides its passive determinations. This conceptual distinction is universal and it is most helpful in the analysis of any human action.

The ease with which one can distinguish active and passive determinants may also lead to some pitfalls. It must be clear that the distinction does not stem from the intrinsic nature of the determinants. The same determinant may be active in one instance and passive in another. Thus, it would be most misleading to imagine that active determinants are always due to human influence, and passive determination invariably derives from the material situation. For historical materialism, this kind of approach is just a mistake; it is ignoring the necessity of always proceeding to “the concrete analysis of the concrete situation.” (Lenin) It is only this concrete analysis which will indicate what the active determinants and the passive determinants of a given result are. Passive determinants are often called “conditions.” This appellation must not blind us to the fact that human attitudes, acts, interventions and the like may be part of the conditions in which an action is realized. To further elaborate using the example of the basketball player, let’s say an uncle urged the person in question to reach this decision, then this would be the active determinant, while the mother may be enthusiastic and the father reluctant. In this instance, the attitudes and interventions of the mother and the father are to be considered as passive determinants, or the case may be that the uncle and the mother are both active determinants, the father being a part of the passive determinants.

The third conceptual tool, the transformation of quantity into quality, is also well known, and as indispensable as the two others for historical materialism in its efforts in theory building. This concept first developed by Hegel underlies a simple fact which is most often overlooked by the current metaphysical point of view. The quantity, the concentration, the intensity, the degree of something is never indifferent to its quality. There are countless examples. After a threshold reached in any incremental process, the nature of the object alters inevitably: You become rich or poor, an adolescent or an old person, a pickpocket or a gangster, an authoritarian manager or a dictator, a patient or a corpse, or again, the tempest becomes a hurricane, a flower becomes a fruit, a wood becomes a forest, a lake becomes a marsh. In short, quantity and quality are not independent of each other. In definite situations quantity determines quality, and *vice versa*.

This third fundamental concept is relevant for the first two concepts already referred to, namely the role/structure and determination concepts. Every role, every social structure has a quantitative limit built within it. This limit may be about the number of actors, the density of their interaction, the intensity of their interrelations, etc. After a certain number of participants, a group becomes a crowd, a theatrical performance may spark a revolt, and friendship may develop into a passionate love affair and so on. Quantity is also important for the determination process. If you are at the verge of falling into the clutches of a mortal illness, your bodily situation which usually is part of the passive determinants may suddenly become the most active determinant of your actions. Genetic inheritance is usually a passive determinant. But let us imagine that you are born with an extraordinary talent for some kind of artistic activity, then this talent will drive your whole life, it will be the most active determinant of your actions. Thus quantity matters, and matters fundamentally. An analysis ignoring quantity as a determinant of quality, as well as one ignoring quality in considering only quantity is totally foreign to historical materialism.

As indicated above, historical materialism's conception of role/structure, of determination, and of the quantity-quality relationship radically transforms the dichotomical approach of the metaphysical stand. For instance, in a given social structure, the individuals performing this or that role may be subjects or objects, depending on the level of analysis. The object of a structure may be another structure or group of structures. But as we deal with an interrelationship, a structure which is a subject, may also be considered as an object. Structures being actualized by individuals in whom they are already partially embedded, the dichotomy between structural fixity and movement does not make sense. Structures are endowed with movement the moment they are actualized. The same relativity holds for the cause-effect relation. What is a cause from a certain point of view may well become a result on another level of analysis. The compulsory-contingent or the law-hazard relationships are also relative. The contingent is the way of realization of the compulsory, whereas the law is realized through a series of accidents. The laws governing the movement of societies or social structures usually take the form of a multitude of casual events. Innumerable quantities of acts, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which may contradict one another or merge to reinforce their impact create a result which in fact is the realization of a law. The social structures give way to an infinity of contingencies which take the form of "luck" for individuals but are in fact the realization of structural constraints. The internal-external dichotomy is also misleading if it is taken absolutely. If the relations between two structures are considered as such, they are external to each other. But, if this relationship is placed within a larger structure encompassing the first two, then their external relationship becomes an internal one for the superior structure. Clearly many other instances may be cited in order to illustrate the fundamental error of metaphysical rigidity in the handling of dichotomies.

But one should not derive the conclusion that all these distinctions are to be washed away from historical materialism's point of view. This kind of general relativism is totally foreign to this conception. What matters is, not ignoring the dichotomies, but refusing to consider them as absolute. As indicated above, dichotomies are very fruitful starting points for scientific research. Let's remember that the first level of analysis taken as an example from the production-consumption scrutiny developed in the *Grundrisse*, was the positing of a dichotomy or a contradiction as a direct identity. But research would not be conducive to results if it were to be stopped at this stage. In reality, this positing permits the introduction of the second level of analysis where the poles of the contradiction are deliberately split apart. For historical materialism this level is only a phase of the scientific research, permitting to introduce the third level, the truly explanatory level where the relativity of the dichotomy under examination is explained with a theory peculiar to this concrete dichotomy. What in fact historical materialism does at the second level is to use the metaphysical approach, in order to single out the peculiarities of each side of the contradiction on its own. It is not wrong to use this level of analysis. But it is wrong to present it, as does the metaphysical approach, as the only relevant stage of scientific exploration.

Using these conceptual tools we may now take a preliminary look at the historical materialist conception of the individual. In this conception the individual is a social structure. As is the case for any social structure, this peculiar structure is composed of active and passive elements. In the other social structures the active element is the individual performing a specific role. In the individual structure this active element, the actor, is the soul.¹² Like the embodiment of a role by its performer, this actor, the soul, is always actualized within a body. Considering the individual as a structure, we can list the following elements which are used by the soul, both as instruments and means of actualization: a living organism, the body; the

¹² In scientific terminology this is called the psyche. Wishing to distance myself from any esoterism, I prefer to use plain language. It goes without saying that the soul, as used here, does not have an independent existence. Synonymous to the psyche, it is imprinted in the body. It is born and dies with it.

genome endowing the body with its biological properties; dispositions inculcated in this body, starting even before its birth through the way of life of the mother; mental predispositions, as brought when born and later developed; a language offered by society and conditioning the baby even before birth; character properties, those genetically inherited, those acquired during the gestation period, and those resulting from face-to-face relations after birth, such as being extrovert, sanguine, choleric, introvert, apathetic, etc.; behavior patterns framed by social traditions and ideologies imposed by the “infant” role as played in a particular family; patterns of conduct acquired by the young individual first as unconscious reflexes and mimicry, later as more conscious preferences, responding to stimuli flowing from outside the family, from the TV, from films, plays, games, books; a specific personal character formed as a result of the superposition of all these elements, a synthesis produced by a series of active and passive determinations, a growing process twisted and enriched by qualitative leaps, in short, a unique formation compelled to preserve a minimum of structural wholeness and equilibrium if it is to survive.

It must be strongly stressed that according to historical materialism, all these elements of the individual structure are without exception social products. This not only holds true for variables influencing the individual after birth, variables whose social character is obvious, but for all those acting prior to birth. It has been indicated above that the tiny part of the human genome peculiar to humankind, our a few percent difference from the chimpanzee, is the result of social evolution. On the other hand, the particular genome of a specific individual is determined through the mating patterns derived from social rules, in other words, from the family structure imposed by society. To this, must be added the fact that the selection, development or repression of the genetic potentialities carried by the individual are the direct result of social factors influencing the individual, not only after birth but beginning with the mother’s pregnancy.

Evidently, as it is the case for any organism the survival of the human body depends on a material exchange with its environment. But when this exchange concerns the human body, even this material exchange is totally determined by society. What we are going to intake as food, our feeding habits, who we are going to mate with, our reproduction habits, all these always derive from our society. Even in her most biological properties the human individual is plainly social. In Marx’ epoch making words and with his emphasis, “the individual *is the social being*.”¹³

As this conception is very often misunderstood it is worth underlining a few points. Evidently, like any material object the human body can be reduced to its chemical elements, to its atoms, or even to its sub-atomic particles. But this evidence does not allow anyone to purport that we must look at the atomic structure of individuals in order to explain their behavior. An alteration in this structure may provoke the formation of a tumor and this fact may tremendously influence an individual’s life. This is true enough. Still it is clear that the atomic structure of an individual does not explain a person’s character. In biology we are faced with the same reality. Biology is nothing more than the instrument of the social. Like the wood used to make a table, it is just raw material. A table made of metal is still a table. The material used to make it will not make a difference in its serving as a table. Although there is no alternative to the human body, it does not follow that humankind can be explained through biology. In the individual, the active element is the soul. And the soul is entirely a social being. All the elements composing the individual structure are tools or means of actualization of the soul. In other words, they are just passive determinants. It is true that in some instances one of these passive determinants can become an active determinant. This is a case of quantity transforming into quality. As in the example of a person falling victim to

¹³ In the third of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, under the title “*Private Property and Communism*,” subsection (3).

cancer one element of the individual structure may grow abnormally. It will then dominate the individual structure; it will become its active determinant. Again, an exceptional combination in an individual's genome may result in the apparition of an outstanding gift for music. And this exceptional gift may dominate an individual's life pushing aside the social determinants usually at work. But such occurrences are aberrant. They may happen to any element of an individual structure functioning as passive determinant. It does not follow that these very exceptional abnormalities should be enough to obliterate the essentially social character of the individual.

But it must be underlined that to assert that the individual is social and that the social is individual does not mean that these two poles are directly identical. This is only a diagnosis relevant for the first level of analysis. From the second level on, this dialectical identity can realize itself only through the specificities of each pole. The main task of the second level of analysis is to uncover these specificities. Only when this task is completed can one proceed to the third level where the formation of every marking specificity of each pole is accounted for through mediations connecting it with again the marking specificities of the other pole. When conducting this analysis, it is very important to be attentive to a fact often overlooked. Each pole, be it individual or social, is composed of various elements each having a particular nature, and this particular nature will determine the concrete realization of this element. For instance, social oppression may drive an individual mad. Madness actualizes itself as a serious dysfunction in neuronal inter-connections, thus its manifestation has an organic nature. The social character of this event is in its root and in its result. Again, an individual setting a public building on fire expresses his/her protest through a physical reaction. In this case a social event realizes itself in the physical. Sometimes it is not necessary to understand these particular mechanisms in order to understand the social event. But in other cases a particular piece of knowledge may be indispensable for the detailed investigation of some social event. This is for example the case in studying the social consequences of climate change.

This point is particularly important when studying the individual pole of the identity. All soul properties without exception are actualized through organic attributes.¹⁴ It is because every soul is unique that the body in which this soul is imprinted is also unique. Each body is totally attuned to its soul. The body speaks for the soul, and not only with its mouth. The gait, the guise, the way to be, the manner of functioning not only of the body as a whole but also of its expressive parts are all expressions of the soul. Eyes are just organs with which one sees, but they attain social meaning by mirroring our souls. Also, what we do to our bodies expresses our souls. Our hair-cut, our make-up, our perfumed odor, the way we cut our nails, epilating or shaving, the development of our muscles, our weight resulting from the choices we make when eating and many other traits are manifestations of the soul. And this is not all. Our hats, our dresses, our shoes, our umbrellas or our walking sticks, our colors, our feathers, our furs or our nakedness, whatever the case may be, all speak for our souls.

The social pole of the individual-society dialectical identity has been well investigated by historical materialism since the foundation of this discipline by Marx and Engels. They provided us with conceptual tools, such as forces of production, relations of production, mode of production, social formation, determination, infra-structure, super-structure, class conflict, revolution and so on, thus enabling a scientific social analysis. They also showed us how to use these tools, especially as detailed by Marx in his analysis of the capitalist mode of production in *Das Kapital*. These efforts have been continued, more or less successfully, by

¹⁴ This organic imprinting of the soul is well stated by George H. Mead, in relation to a specific cognitive capability: "If one has acquired a certain facility in playing the violin, that past experience is registered in the nerves and muscles themselves, but mainly in connections found in the central nervous system, in the whole set of paths there which are kept open so that when the stimulus comes in there is released a complex set of elaborate responses." (1934: 116)

many of their followers. But the contribution of the tenants of historical materialism to the individual pole of the individual-society dialectical identity is very meager. Concepts developed for society cannot be used as they stand for the individual. As it is a mistake to use psychological concepts to analyze society, it would be erroneous to use concepts such as infra-structure, super-structure, fixed capital to analyze the individual. Thus, historical materialism has no other choice but to examine other theories in order to fill in the void of its missing concepts. Otherwise the third level of the analysis cannot be carried out.

PART II: Other approaches

In this second part I will take a look at other theories in order to divulge how they handle the individual-social dichotomy. Evidently this cannot be a comprehensive survey. I will only pick theories which seem meaningful, either for clarifying the historical materialist approach, or complementing it. The theories to be considered are grouped under three headings: 1) The sociality of the body; 2) The sociality of the soul; and 3) The individuality of society. Under the first approach, I will consider theories setting out from the body. Under the second, I will consider theories centering on the soul. Whereas the third heading will be reserved for theories starting from society, with the hope of accounting for the individual.

Evidently, a detailed exposition of any of these theories is out of question. Besides, all are probably known to the reader. I will only outline some of their features, when necessary in order to assess them in the light of historical materialism.

1) The sociality of the body

Both for the laymen and for almost all scientists, the opinion that the human is primordially a living being, an organism is almost a truism. The existence of the soul can be discussed, but the primacy of the body is there to be seen by everyone. The human may be presented as social, as loving, as producing, as laughing, as talking or as having whatever attribute one likes to bestow on it, the fact that the attribute in question belongs to an animal is obvious. Thus, if we want to understand the human we must start out from the basic fact of its animality.

This view is widespread even among theorists who underline the psychological or social properties of humankind. It is so pervasive that it is taken for granted even when it is not stated openly. Thus, the generally held characterization of humankind as a “bio-psychosocial” species, puts the “bio” at the forth. Of course, as stated beforehand, the human cannot be reduced to its biology. Its psychological and sociological aspects must also be taken into account. But first its animality must be recognized.

One of the best illustrations of this approach is Abraham Maslow’s needs theory. I prefer to present it in the words of Hall and Lindzey taken from their excellent survey of theories of personality: “Maslow has propounded a theory of human motivation which assumes that needs are arranged along a hierarchy of priority and potency. When the needs that have the greatest potency and priority are satisfied, the next needs in the hierarchy emerge and press for satisfaction. ... The hierarchical order ... is as follows: physiological needs such as hunger and thirst, safety needs, needs for belongingness and love, esteem needs, needs for self-actualization, cognitive needs such as thirst for knowledge, and finally aesthetic needs such as the desire for beauty.” (1963: 326)

According to Maslow, all these needs, from the most material to the most spiritual, are the result of human evolution. Their hierarchy indicates the steps of the evolution process. As they are products of evolution, all these needs are at the same degree properties of the species. None can be ignored. As such, they impose themselves over all individuals. As this is our nature, no individual will or social education can alter these needs or change their hierarchy. To do this would simply mean crippling our humanity.

One of the most interesting theories propounding the existence of a basic human nature belongs to Alfred Adler. What makes it interesting is that for Adler humankind's basic nature is to be a social being. Sociality is inbuilt in human nature. As Hall and Lindzey rightfully underline, for Adler, sociality is not a social product, it is a natural phenomenon. Humankind is still an animal species. But the peculiarity of this species is to be naturally social. (1963: 117) Despite all this insistence on sociality, herein lies the fundamental difference of Adler's theory with the historical materialist approach. This is also the case for Feuerbach's understanding of the human. For Feuerbach, the human is an animal whose primary quality is to be able to love one another. The humanity of any individual is that capacity for love. (Engels, 1886, *Part 3: Feuerbach*) Feuerbach's and Maslow's humans are loving, altruist, co-operative, in one word, social-minded people at birth. Every individual once born is already endowed with that kind of nature.

At first sight Maslow's theory is very appealing. It is basic common-sense. Isn't it natural to think that people must first feed themselves, satisfy their sexual and other biological urges, protect themselves against all kinds of danger, seek love, friendship and esteem, and then show their unique individuality by trying to do the most with their potentialities, endeavor to understand the world around them, and finally, crown all these undertakings with a search for beauty? It is not surprising that the listing of the principal needs of humankind in such a hierarchy should seem obvious to almost everybody.

We will see that in historical materialism's opinion this approach is totally misled. But first the case for the body as an inevitable intermediary must be plainly stated. Like all organisms the body needs to spend and renew its energy. The younger it is the more this necessity manifests itself. It is enough to watch the almost incessant movement of children and compare this with the relative inertia of the old, to acknowledge this fact. The main way to spend energy and recharge it is to satisfy biological drives or urges. In other words, energy retrieval and consumption is primarily realized through the satisfaction of organic needs. The satisfaction of needs requires obtaining appropriate objects. These objects act as stimuli for the corresponding needs. On the other hand, material objects are not the only source of energy. This point is strongly underlined by Randall Collins (2004). We do not get energy solely out of material objects. Social intercourse is also an important provider of energy. This is true. But the fact is that social intercourse itself discharges its energy, not in emptiness, but in the bodies of individuals. The structure of the individual is always enshrined in an organism. The body has no alternative as embodiment of individual structures. So whatever the kind of connection that the individual establishes, the body is always there as an inescapable intermediary. The satisfaction of even the most spiritual need is always experienced as a bodily pleasure. Not only a lustful wink, but also crazy applause, and even a profound religious experience will stimulate voluptuous feelings. If we feel something we have to feel it in our bodies. There is no other way for it. Agreeable experiences provide bodily satisfaction. And in that sense it is true that the human individual is a pleasure seeking being. The "right to happiness," is only a spiritual way of expression of this simple truth.

All this is well and true, but still, it does not warrant the validity of the view according to which the human species is a kind of animal. To start with, it is not true that the need is shaped by the organism. In the origin there is only a bodily urge. What shapes it is the object of satisfaction. And the object is always social. As stressed by the Soviet biologist Leont'ev

(1978) what give their true color to the needs are their social objects of satisfaction. Can one purport that the need satisfied through an intravenous serum injection is the same as the need satisfied by savages tearing apart and sharing the flesh of their pray? Again, all pleasures as well as all feelings are experienced in the body. But does this prove that their source is also the body? Not at all; satisfactions always stem from social relations. And not only the source but the degree of any satisfaction is eminently social. If this was not the case, no one could explain the differences in the pleasure provided by masturbation, sexual intercourse with a professional, and the blissful experience of love-making with a beloved partner. Pleasure is not something mechanic or organic, it is social.

The human individual is an embodied sociality. In a very strong sense, the body is particular to each individual. The source of this particularity is the individual soul. The soul is the individual form of the social. And it is imprinted all over the body, in our brains, in our neurons, in our synapses, in our hormones, in our muscles, in our genes and so forth. As indicated above, the imprint of the soul on the body does not end there. From our hair-cut to our perfume, from our manners to our fittings, the soul surrounds and impregnates the body from all directions. The human body, as totally different from any animal body, is an organism infused by an individual soul, which itself is nothing but the individual manifestation of social relations.

The fact that the body is a binding intermediary is obvious.¹⁵ But, from this fact we cannot jump, either to the conclusion that the body is the primary determinant of humanity, or to the conclusion that it is the fundamental human reality.¹⁶ In fact, when it comes to the human, biology is the inevitable mirror of social impacts. Let's take as an example the well known case of the testosterone hormone. Scientific research has revealed that this hormone has an important role both in sexuality, and aggressiveness. The sexual and aggressive drives regress in castrated males. But, contrary to what one might assume at first, this is not proof of a direct biological causation. For there is also proof of just the opposite determination: The testosterone levels of men beaten in fights decline. Testing of testosterone levels of men after tennis matches or chess tournaments reveal that the testosterone level of winners increases while it falls in losers (Zuckerman, 2005: 228). And contrary to Zuckerman's view we cannot reach the conclusion that the biological and the social cause may have equal weight. Primarily, as indicated above, as it is the case for all hormones, the level of testosterone in humans is determined by evolution. And for humankind evolution is primarily bound to social processes. Secondly, the hormone composition of every individual is the result of a sexual intercourse, of a gestation period, of a raising process, and of diverse social encounters all determined by social relations. As the individual is inescapably embedded in a body, it is inevitable that social impact is reflected through biological means. If testosterone were a determining element instead of being a means, people having the same level of testosterone would behave in a similar fashion under all conditions. This is not at all the case.

Of course, you need some instrument to produce music. The instrument determines the peculiar sound of the music produced but it does not account for its composition. The body is, in a sense, the instrument of the soul. No concertos or sonatas are produced by pianos or violins. But obviously, some instrument, be it the human vocal chords or something else must be used in order to produce music. In this sense, nothing human is possible without the body. It does not follow that the body is the source or the foundation of humanity. It is interesting to

¹⁵ For a very interesting and relatively new book depicting the biological forms taken by the soul: Wagner and Siber, 2004.

¹⁶ A simple metaphor may be helpful in understanding the relationship of soul and body. Imagine that someone has carved the following statement on the trunk of a tree: "Paul loves Mary". Obviously, the carving could not exist without the tree. But the tree cannot explain the carving. The difference with the human body is that the carving is impregnated in the tree instead of being simply engraved on it.

note that Engels makes the same point in rebuking philosophical idealism: "... we simply cannot get away from the fact that everything that sets men acting must find its way through their brains -even eating and drinking, which begins as a consequence of the sensation of hunger and thirst transmitted through the brain, and ends as a result of the satisfaction likewise transmitted through the brain." If we conclude from this fact, says Engels, that humans always follow "ideal tendencies" and are thus under the sway of "ideal powers", we should conclude that everybody would be born an idealist with no materialist left. (1886, *Part 2: Materialism*, fourth paragraph from the end)

The strongest objection of historical materialism to an approach starting from the body is that, whatever their peculiarities, all these theories imply the acceptance of an invariable human nature or of a human nature varying in the pace of biological evolution. This is what qualifies animality. Animals can be social; they can even acquire and transmit some culture. But they are inexorably condemned to their invariant nature. Seeing the body as fundamental to humankind reflects a double error, one being the inevitable consequence of the other. The first mistake is to start with the body in order to find out what is human. Maslow's theory of needs is one of the best illustrations of this mistake. The second mistake is inseparable from the first one. If the body is the first basic part of humanity, the body as an organism being more or less invariant in its main characters, we are entitled to seek a more or less invariant human nature as well.

According to Maslow and to scores of other scientists and to the bulk of the lay, the first needs of humans are food, drink and sex. One is entitled to ask why. If it is because you cannot survive without eating, one must be allowed to ask if we can survive without breathing or moving. I think everybody will agree that we cannot. Even so, no one has suggested up to now that breathing and moving must be considered as primary human needs. Every little human, as soon as she is born starts to breathe, to move, to suckle, in brief to satisfy all her bodily needs in the frame of the conditions established by a given society. But imagine that you cannot breathe because of asthma or heavily polluted air, or that you cannot move because of paralysis or very tight imprisonment conditions, then breathing and moving would become the most stringent, the most basic human needs for you. In short, which or if any of the human needs bodily mediated are to become important needs is either an exceptional activation of a passive determinant or a social matter. If you live in a classless society with a minimum of material resources in its environment, eating will not be your first need. You will feed yourself as naturally as you would breathe or move around. Again if you live in a society ignoring oppression, you would satisfy your sexual drives as socially as feeding yourself, so desire for sex would not find a prominent place among human needs. Hunger, compulsory labor for getting food, stringent sex regulations as a foundation for authority, all are constituent traits of societies thriving on class exploitation. It is because we are living in class societies since thousands of years that the social conditions imposed by these societies seem natural to us. That eating and sex should be the first human needs is only witness to the shame of our society and has nothing to do with a so-called invariant organic human nature.

To say that humankind is endowed with this or that basic nature is another facet of the same mistake. If humanity has a natural character this should be imprinted in our bodies. So notwithstanding the peculiarities of this nature, the mere fact of accepting it means in fact accepting the invariance of human nature and thus the preeminence of the body. Defining this human nature as being fundamentally social does not make the slightest difference. Social friendly (Adler) or loving (Feuerbach), as long as it is established at once as human nature, this has nothing to do with historical materialism's sociality. According to Marx, humankind is the social being. Thus its nature will be socially determined and will vary according to the characteristics of society. As in the case of the capitalist mode of production, humans may be driven to be basically egoistic as a result of the conditions of their own society. Being social

does not mean at all being socially friendly. So in addition to Maslow's, Adler's theory also has nothing to do with historical materialism.

To what degree humankind's nature is furnished by society is strikingly illustrated by the case of little humans accidentally torn off their social environment. The famous French director François Truffaut in his film *l'Enfant sauvage* shot in 1969 tells the story of a child abandoned in a forest, growing up among animals until adolescence and found later by villagers. Despite all the professional and dedicated efforts of a physician with state support, the film shows in details how humanization is doomed to fail under these circumstances. As for their bodies these individuals are organically humans. But the fact is that the body does not suffice to make a human. As is well known, during the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a keen interest in France for research on such cases. Taner Timur summarizes as follows the conclusions reached at the end of these studies: "These are the marking characters of 'savage children' found out during this period: 1) These children were walking on four legs, like animals; 2) they were never able to learn to speak; 3) they were not manifesting any sexual desire; 4) they were not recognizing themselves in a mirror; 5) they ignored laughing." (2007: 153) Could they be any stronger proof for the non-determination of humanity by the organism? Individuals growing with no social contact whatsoever are unable to develop even their most basic human organic properties.

Is this to say that the human body has no meaning at all for historical materialism? Not at all since on two counts, the body matters a lot. The first one is obvious. Were our bodies different, our social means would differ accordingly. If our average height was let's say 250 centimeters and our average weight 200 kilos, there is no doubt that the size of for example our dwellings, of our cars, of our public buildings would have been different. The same goes for the particularities of our senses, like the reach of our voices or our walking speed. This point needs no further elaboration. It is doubtless that the properties of the body determine the shape of the means we use.

But the second point is much more important. Social life or its individual form, namely the soul, being imprinted in the body it is possible to influence it by manipulating the body. Due to tremendous and still accelerating advances in sciences, it becomes possible to influence social life to an ever increasing degree in time. From the discovery of birth control methods to impotence and probably soon, to frigidity pills, the body as a social instrument gains enormous weight. Genetics, brain research, implanted robots, drug research and other advances allow such a manipulation of the body, to the extent that the days where social life will be determined in some degree by the body seem in the not so distant future. This will be another confirmation of historical materialism's point of view: What gives growing importance to the body is its increasing use by social forces to achieve social ends. The molding of human nature by society presently reaches what seemed to be its most natural part, the body itself.

2) *The sociality of the soul*

A second group of theories attempt to account for the individual-society couple by starting out from the soul. From time immemorial humans have noted that death was accompanied by yielding one's breath. Breathing was synonymous with living, and dying with cessation of respiration. Exhaling air out of and inhaling air into the body was what kept it alive. It is not by chance that "wind" was used as synonymous with life. Within time this 'wind' came to be considered as something independent from the body. The body could pass away while this wind, the soul, could live eternally as it was itself the principle of life.

This conception of the soul is a religious matter and, of course, it has nothing to do with science. Nonetheless, it is a fact that each individual has a different way of being alive. For instance whereas some are sanguine, others are phlegmatic. It has been already recalled

that classification of individuals according to their characters started systematically at least since the Antiquity. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics (Book II)*, endeavors to study the “psyche”. The psyche means the “bios” for him. Just life. But in the ancient Greek conception this bios or psyche, was responsible for an individual’s behavior. The main aim in reflecting on the psyche, was to achieve, as much as it is possible, morally right behavior. Aristotle spots the existence of three kinds of elements in any psyche: passions, faculties, and states of character, and weighs them according to the aim of achieving a virtuous life.

The dualism of body and mind can be understood in two ways: Either in an ontologic sense, and then the soul is viewed as having an existence on its own; or as a dualism of properties, where only the qualitative difference of the soul is stated, without implying necessarily that the soul and the body are two independent entities. This second conception is of course compatible with materialism and thus with a scientific outlook. Traditionally, psychology, the study of the mind and behavior, was part of philosophy. It is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that psychology started to be viewed as an independent field of scientific investigation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century psychology was concentrated mainly on the treatment of mental illnesses. And thus psychiatry started to develop. In this process emerged the idea that in order to treat the psyche, one has to handle it as an independent scientific research object. In the field of psychiatry, it is Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis who must be granted the incomparable merit of being the first to consider the soul, the psyche, as a truly peculiar object of study.

Freud was a materialist. For him, the soul is not independent from the body. Nevertheless it has its own specificity. The psyche is composed of feelings and thoughts. For Freud, it is an active system, using energy, endowed with a specific structure and performing specific functions. Up to Freud, individual behavior was explained either by conscious choices, or instincts developed in the course of evolution. Abnormal behavior was stemming from heredity or was the result of damage inflicted to an individual’s nervous system. Without denying the importance of heredity or organic damage Freud maintained that individual feelings and behavior could be explained by mostly unconscious psychic drives, and that these drives were elements of a complex psychic structure.

In Freud’s conception the psyche is a structure with three compartments, the id, the ego, and the super-ego. The function of the id, is to find satisfaction for mostly sexual drives, which every individual acquires through heredity, and in the course of early infancy. These drives carry energy, their satisfaction brings pleasure and their frustration creates anxiety at the least or various more or less severe psychological dysfunctions. But, as manifested by the super-ego, society elevates quite strict barriers to the satisfaction of the id drives. The function of the ego is to manage the satisfaction of id drives in a manner compatible with the rules of the super-ego. In doing this the ego follows the reality principle, owing to which it is able to check the pleasure principle of the id. The psychic structure realizing this dynamic equilibrium is more or less completed at the age of five. This explains why it is mostly unconscious.

As can be noted, with Freud we have for the first time, instead of a simple description of character traits, a theory explaining the formation, the development, the structure and the functioning of the psyche. Many after Freud have tried to complement his theory or to bring about some partial corrections to it. One of the best examples is Erik Erikson who has already been mentioned. Erikson, as recalled above, expanded psychic formation to the whole life of the individual and attempted to account for it in different cultures. Karen Horney made another very important contribution. But before referring to this the value of Freud’s theory for historical materialism needs to be assessed.

Freud is the real founder of psychology. His theory is indispensable for the carrying out of the second level of analysis of the individual-social couple, where each pole of the

dichotomy must be elucidated in detail. Historical materialism does not have the necessary conceptual tools for the analysis of the individual pole. The conception of the psyche as a determined structure, ridden by mostly unconscious conflicts, trying to preserve its equilibrium by using unconscious defense mechanisms, is no doubt a very fruitful conception. But to be integrated within historical materialism it requires some correction and reassessing.

The main flaw of psychoanalysis is its biologism, and inevitably attached to it, its acceptance of an invariable human nature. It is true that Freud is incomparably superior to the theorists starting out from the body and his sexual drives are biological but they are shaped by a social relationship. The infant's sexual urges are shaped through his/her feelings towards the woman begetting him/her and the man caring for the mother and their children. Freud reasoned that as always a little human will be engendered by a couple, and as the vulnerability of the child renders compulsory a rather long raising period, a child in any society and in any period of history would always experience the same basic relation with his/her parents.

The mistake in this conception is twofold. The first mistake is to take any drive, the sexual drive in Freud's case, as a biological primary need of humankind. As indicated in the last subsection, this kind of approach presupposes the existence of an invariable human nature, whereas historical materialism holds that human nature varies according to the nature of society, and the nature of society is mainly determined by its mode of production. The second mistake is to present a certain social structure, the parents-children structure as being eternal. In other words, Freud's conception is only apparently social as it has no historicity. It is a kind of extended biologism, an animal relationship; despite all its appearances it is not human.

It is not impossible to correct this flaw and still keep Freud's main conception. Karen Horney starts out very persuasively, not from an invariable sexual urge in the newly born child, but from the indisputable fact that in all societies newly born children have to be cared for for a rather long period of time and feel very vulnerable during this period. If this "basic anxiety" of the child is not sufficiently alleviated by his/her social environment, the child will inevitably develop neuroses, that is, distorted psychic structures helping him/her in coping with a menacing world. So, "neuroses are ultimately a product of the particular civilization" (1945: 161). "The kind, scope, and intensity of such conflicts are largely determined by the civilization in which we live." (1945: 24) As can be easily seen, for Horney, psychic conflicts do not invariably stem from the inhibition of a biologically located sexual instinct, but vary accordingly to social conditions changing from one society to another. Horney's individual is social from the outset and has a psychic structure that is molded by the society of which she is a part of.

Thus corrected, Freud's conception provides us with a very rich theory enabling us to work out the properties of the individual pole of the individual-society couple. The individual is not just a social residue. It has its own originality and must be understood as such. We saw that in understanding the individual, starting out from the body is totally misleading. Freud pointed to the psyche as the truly significant individual object. And he was right. Even if he could not completely liberate himself from biologism he hit a bull's-eye. The individual pole of the individual-society couple is not a body, it is a psyche. As Freud was the first to explain, this psyche is a system. Like all systems it needs to preserve its balance and its wholeness. When it experiences disequilibrium and disintegrating impacts in its relations with other individual systems it develops defense mechanisms. These unconscious reactions provoke distortions in the system, preventing it from functioning smoothly. The psyche is composed of feelings and thoughts. Thoughts and feelings are always intermingled, but they are not of equal importance. The psyche is essentially a feeling structure and these feelings are for the most part unconscious. Freud believed that our unconscious psychic parts were under the sway of a very bodily sexual drive. He was wholly misled on this point. But he was right in

underscoring the predominantly unconscious “id” in explaining our behavior. For historical materialism it is not the existence and role of the id which is problematic. On the contrary, this is a fruitful conception. What is problematic is the biological and thus invariant nature of that id. If we see the id as uniquely and differently constructed for each individual in different cultures the problem is solved. The id and, as far as it is unconscious the super-ego, provide us with conceptual tools permitting us to understand how a culture realizes itself concretely in an individual. On the other hand, the ego accounts for the conscious activity of the individual. The individual, driven by its socially shaped id and super-ego, and urged by the conscious choices of its ego becomes thus the instrument of the replication of any society, as well as of its modification. In short, the conception of the psyche first developed by Freud offers us the theoretical framework needed to analyze the individual. After indispensable corrections, it is not only possible to integrate his theory into the historical materialist approach this integration is inescapable for historical materialism if it wants to be able to account for the individual side of the individual-society couple. In other words, a revised Freud is the only possibility for the carrying out of the second level of the analysis of the dialectical identity of the individual and the social.

The other great theorist of the psyche is Jean Piaget. His immense merit is the conceptualization of the intellectual component of the soul. Piaget called his theory “genetic epistemology”. His aim was to construct, in his own words, a kind of “embryology of the intellect” (1970: 34). Taking as his model the development of the organic embryo through a determined process, Piaget endeavored to find out the process governing the genesis and necessary steps of development followed by the ‘intellectual embryo’. As a result of many astute and insightful experiments and observations about children, he was able to establish the necessary phases of the intellectual development of children. Thus he found out that every child acquires first “sensori-motor schemes”, later “figurative schemes”, and finally “operative schemes”, providing her with more efficient cognitive tools at each stage. What is more, he did not satisfy himself with this broad classification, but he carried out minute research to work out the details in the development of each stage. For instance, he divided the first phase which lasts around eighteen months into six sub-steps, showing how starting from the first days after birth the reflexes of the child are conditioned, what kind of learning process she experiences through her own activity, allowing thus the acquisition of the basic cognitive patterns of any human intellect, such as ‘the identity of the object with itself’, ‘space as the emplacement of the object’, ‘before and after, in time’, cause as ‘provoking or giving way’.

It is of course impossible to attempt to summarize this very rich theory. What makes it peculiarly interesting, is its consideration of cognitive development as a process realized through the current activity of the child. The incessant experiment of the child with its environment, endows her with a continuous flow of cognitive capabilities, thus transforming her and making her receptive to new capabilities. In other words, learning is always realized through doing and its result is a cognitively more capable subject ready for ever enhanced learning. Cognitive structures are not the result of a process of abstraction and generalization of perceptions, they are formed through the activity of the child, they are abstracted molds of operational patterns (Piaget/Inhelder, 1969: 49).

Piaget’s theory is individual-social from the outset. From birth on, the formation of intellectual structures of the individual is a direct result of her/his social activity. The intellect gains progressively more abstract cognitive structures by the internalization of continuously repeated successful operations. And this is a universal process. It is not culturally conditioned. In all societies, at all times, newly born individuals have to acquire the same basic cognitive capabilities in order to be able to function as normal humans. Like the organic body this intellectual body is universal. It is the prerequisite of the material reproduction of human life.

By showing that this common intellectual body of humankind is produced by the repeated social activity of the individual, Piaget is directly subscribing to the view of the social character of humanity. It is true that, as is the case for Freud, there is no historicity in Piaget's theory. But, contrary to Freud's theory, this is not at all a problem for historical materialism. Piaget is simply explaining the genesis and the structure of the intellect. In other words, he establishes its form. He is the biologist of the human intellect. How humans use these cognitive structures depend of course on the nature of their societies. Unlike Freud who established a fixed action pattern for all humankind, Piaget, not unlike a biologist investigating the human body, limits himself to the elucidation of the formation of the human mind. And, as already highlighted, he carries out this elucidation in a frame cast entirely in the social characterization of humankind. As such his theory can and must be directly imported within historical materialism.

The Soviet psychologist El'konin criticizes Piaget's step-by-step cognitive development theory on the grounds that it does not account for the passage from one step to the next. This is his question: What pushes the child to carry on to the next cognitive phase? (1971). According to El'konin, the answer to this question is to be found in the sentimental stimulus flowing out of the face-to-face relations of the child. In other words, El'konin underlines that intellectual development cannot be separated from emotional development. I think he is right. And Piaget would probably agree. But this is not Piaget's problem.

The productive capacity attained by any society is of course reflected in the biological and intellectual capabilities of its members. But what pushes the individuals to use these organic and intellectual means in the way they do? What incites them to develop new products, to make children, to inculcate specific roles to their children? And what is more, what pushes a child to develop in this or that direction? These are pertinent questions and El'konin is entitled to ask them. And I think he is right in searching for the solution in the face-to-face relations of the child. The human individual is not a machine or a naturally programmed organism. To get activated she needs the active determination of an intimate set of social relations. The means used by these structures are essentially affective. The soul is a predominantly feeling and only secondarily thinking structure. So its thinking, as well, must be explained by its feeling. Piaget is the theoretician of the thinking part, Freud, of the feeling part. And this marks his greatness.

In the search for an explanation of the individual-society dichotomy the first approach started out from the body. We have tried to display that all these theories are basically misconstrued. So they do not have anything to contribute to historical materialism. Their main aim is to help in clarifying the historical materialist point of view.

On the contrary, the second approach is very fruitful. Its main contention is that the individual has to be grasped as a psyche. The main theorist in this field is undoubtedly Freud. His greatness must be recognized. Pioneering a completely new eye opener Freud, quite understandably, was not able to erase the traces of biologism dominating his intellectual formation. That is why his theory must be reformulated in order to be useful in a perspective based on the dialectical identity of the individual and society. The other great theorist of the psyche, Piaget, does not require any major correction to be integrated in historical materialism. Piaget made the theory of the cognitive structures of the soul. Human activity gets its specific form from the body, its intellectual form from the mind. In both cases there is only a formal determination. These forms also are socially shaped, but they are not essential in the determination of human action. The content of human action is determined by social structures composed of structured individuals. The social structures are best explained by historical materialism; the individual ones, by psychology. In this field, the theorists that count for historical materialism are mainly Freud, with some of his critical followers, and

Piaget. It is only when these theories are integrated within historical materialism that the second level of the analysis of the individual-society dialectical identity will be possible.

3) *The individuality of society*

The third group of theories, in contrast to the first two approaches, start out from society in their effort to account for the individual-society couple. Among these theories the most well-known are those which may be grouped under the heading of cultural psychology. Abraham Kardiner already cited in the introduction takes place in this group with his research on the “basic personality” required by each different culture. Anthropologists and ethnologists when facing the problem of explaining the behavior of individuals composing a given society as a rule take the culture of this society as their starting point.

To illustrate the cultural psychologist approach to the individual I will use Barbara Rogoff’s *Cultural Nature of Human Development* (2003). The basic contention of this approach is that it is a mistake to consider the individual as an independent object of study. To underline the social nature of the individual they refer to their approach as “sociocultural”, “sociohistorical” or “cultural-historical” (2003: 49). Three points are strongly underlined: social, historical, and cultural. In the determination of the individual, the first point directs attention to the network of relations, the second to the influence of past experiences, the third to socially determined patterns of behavior. In reality, the third point encompasses the first two. This explains the preference for the use of the adjective “cultural”.

Concrete forms taken by culture may vary immensely from one society to another. There are no invariant cultural figures resulting from evolution, the body, or the similarity of organic needs. Even components reckoned to be most ‘natural’ may vary widely from one culture to another. “Cultural research”, says Rogoff, “questions the assumption that the care-giving role is naturally provided by the mother, or by the parents, or even by a particular adult. Around the world, different people in the family, neighborhood, and community provide different aspects of infant and child care.” (2003: 116) “Daily supervision of children may be the responsibility of the whole community, without the need for any particular adult to devote primary attention to the pack of children.” (2003: 128)¹⁷

Cultural psychology, just like historical materialism, maintains that cultural patterns are evolved by society as a response to concrete needs, that individuals are raised in conformity with these patterns, and that these patterns are continually reshaped by individuals to respond to new needs. According to this approach, all aspects of individual development are both the product and the producer of cultural patterns. “The sociocultural approach ... offers an integrated approach to human development. Cognitive, social, perceptual, motivational, physical, emotional, and other processes are regarded as aspects of sociocultural activity rather than as separate, free-standing capabilities or ‘faculties’.” (2003: 237) As seen, in the eyes of cultural psychology, no single aspect of individual development is the result of an independent individual process. All are elements of social interactions. But of course, in these interactions, the individual is an active agent, a willing participant, even if the exact significance of the individual action is not grasped. This role of the individual is easily understandable for historical materialism, as, in this conception, social energy is in fact always individual.

The conception developed by cultural psychology for the understanding of the individual-social relationship is not very different from Bourdieu’s analysis recalled above. For both, the individual and the social, are two aspects of the same reality. “... habitus and field ... are two modes of existence of history, or of society, the concretization of history, the objectivation of institution, and the incarnation of history, incorporated institution.”

¹⁷ This observation contrasts sharply with Freud’s contention about the invariance of the parents-child relationship upon which the universal Oedipus complex is based.

(Bourdieu, 1994: 172) In this view, as is the case in cultural psychology, the social forms, institutions, symbolic means, preferences, are imprinted in the individual. As already indicated, Bourdieu calls this social imprint “habitus”. Fields serving various social functions are framed by particular material and symbolic distributions of power centers. The individual habitus is determined by the situation of the individual within a social field. But despite this determination the individuals fight constantly to come nearer the centers of material and symbolic power. This constant fight entails an incessant restructuration of every social field, thus permitting under special conditions the relocalization of the individuals within each field. Thus, even if not easily, a relative modification of individual situations in different fields takes place.

In sum, like the tenants of cultural psychology, Bourdieu maintains that all the agents of social relations, are already determined individuals, or in his words, individuals with an already constituted habitus. This view is consistent with historical materialism. His insistence on the specificity of the various social fields in which these determined individuals act is also conform to historical materialism. “The external determinants that the Marxists speak of ... may have an impact only through the transformations they provoke in the structure of the field.” (Bourdieu, 1994: 68) In my *Essay on the Nature of the State* devoted to the elucidation of the historical materialist approach to the state, I had formulated this methodological rule as follows: “*The result of a determination depends on the nature of the determined, and not on that of the determinant.*” (Eroğul, 1981: 21, stressed in the original) And from there I concluded that: “What is needed for every sphere of the social formation, is an analysis of its specific function(s) and modality(ies), as well as emphasizing its constitutive links with the economic factor.” (1981: 142 n.7) For clarification: Historical materialism, as a general social theory, states that the mode of production, in other words, the economic factor is the fundamental determinant of society. But such a general theory cannot give us the theory of any particular social field determined by the economic factor. Because, as indicated above, the result of economic determination will not depend on the economic factor but on the nature of the determined social field. That is why I felt obliged to seek out a specific theory of the state, in order to understand the impact of the economic factor on the level of politics. The same goes for every other social field. It is an entirely insufficient theoretical approach to claim that the economic determines everything and to stop there. To find out how this determination works we must have in hand the theory of the particular field submitted to this determination. This explains the need of a particular theory of law, of culture, of family, and the rest, without which historical materialism would be reduced to an empty frame. Marx undertook this task in relation to the capitalist mode of production. A similar effort is indispensable for each social field, and Bourdieu is right in stressing this necessity.

Thus, a brief exploration of cultural psychology’s and Bourdieu’s approaches show us that these theories can be very serviceable to historical materialism through their research on the practical determination of individualities by cultural environments, and in the differentiated impacts of various cultural fields surrounding all individuals. What is more, these approaches all stress that despite all the weight of cultural determinants, the individuals are not passive products, but active agents shaping their own destinies within definite constraints. Marx’ assertion of “men as the actors and authors of their own history”¹⁸ is a view in the same vein. But of course, all these theories need some reassessment in order to be integrated within historical materialism as none espouses Marx’s contention concerning the basic determination of all social structures by the mode of production and reproduction of the material necessities of social life.

¹⁸ *The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), Chapter 2: The Metaphysics of Political Economy, Part 1: The Method, Fifth Observation.*

Another attempt to reach the individual by starting out from society is Lucien Sève's theory of personality. What makes this theory particularly interesting for this article is that it deliberately places itself within the historical materialist framework. Sève's starting point is Marx' definition of the human essence as given in the *Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach (1845)*: "... the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." The object of Sève's theory of personality, are the concrete biographies of individuals as they are determined by a given ensemble of social relations. According to Sève, biographies are constituted of personal actions. Actions are distinguished from personal conducts as they include not only the subjective act but also its result. Such a definition considers all behavior, without exception, as part of a social relation (Sève, 1969: 383). The action potential of an individual depends on her capabilities. This is the second important concept of Sève's theory of personality. Like actions, capabilities also are social products. Actions are divided into two main clusters: I. Actions aiming at developing capabilities, and II. Actions producing a social result by making use of the acquired capabilities (Sève, 1969: 386).

These two clusters of action represent the two sections of the human personality. Sève likens the first section to the accumulated fixed capital of a society fostering the development of the social productive capacity. The more a person enlarges this first part, the more developed her personality becomes. Within this line of thought which actions are going to take place in the first or the second section of the personality, how much time will be allocated to actions of the first or the second section, are all determined by the system of social relations. As seen, the building blocks of any personality, the components of all biographies are actions determined by a given social order. The whole life of any personality is divided between actions of the first and actions of the second type. This division holds as well for any particular period in an individual's life. Thus, society determines the structure of all personalities, not only in the whole biography but also in different periods of life. What makes up the personality of any individual is the fundamental balance between actions devoted to the development of personality and actions performed for the accomplishment of a social task by making use of already acquired capabilities. It follows that the best instrument for defining a personality is the concept of schedule, as it is the expression of the relative amount of time spent for different activities. The structure of any concrete personality is determined by society through a schedule imposed by the set of social relations in which the individual takes place.

In Sève's view, what really matters is the adult personality. Determinations carried on since childhoods have a limited importance. The single most important structure of any society is its mode of production. Thus, the main action pattern of any individual relates to the actions realized by this individual in her productive activity, or in other words, during her work. It is this pattern which molds an individual's personality. But the pattern imposed by the predominant mode of production is not intangible. Social struggles, revolutionary action alter social relations, allowing the extension of the time devoted to the first section of personalities, entailing thus a development in individual personalities. For Sève, the fundamental psychological rule of any personality is the necessity to allocate enough time to actions strengthening the first section of personalities. Every person starves for a working schedule fitting her capabilities. Psychological equilibrium requires a rewarding schedule assuring a maximum flourishing of anyone's abilities. Psychological satisfaction depends mainly on the righteous use of the human instrument. But the fact is that no social order based on human exploitation allows a schedule sympathetic to human development. This discord between a crippling working schedule imposed by society and the basic need for development of human personalities explains all the inner contradictions, frustrations, dissatisfactions, anxieties, sorrows suffered by individuals.

The superiority of Sève's approach is its provision of a theoretical link between social order and individual psychologies. Its contention of a molding of individual psychologies by a working time-table imposed by the dominant mode of production, its division of every psychology into two sections, the first illustrating the social richness of the individual, and the second reflecting the social servitude of the working person, and finally its pointing to the main contradiction of any psychology as the struggle to use and develop at the fullest the individual potential, against the limitations imposed by society, are very fruitful ideas. Another great advantage of this approach is that it is open to practical research, as the working schedule of any economy can be rigorously recorded, the relative amount of time allocated to activities enriching the personality can be calculated, and these results may be compared to the subjective estimations of the working people.

But despite its richness Sève's theory has some serious shortcomings. The first criticism it deserves is its underestimation of the entire psychological development taking place before professional life, that is work, begins. The time in question is quite long, and it is beyond doubt that this period has a very strong structuring impact on the individual psychology. The second criticism is not that strong. But it is a fact that the whole of an individual's life cannot be reduced to her work, even if it can be conceded that for the vast majority this is the most important social activity. But the worst of the criticism is yet to be made: Like all theorists starting with social relations, Sève does not have much to say about the structure of the individual psyche. True, he goes much farther than most, with his two sectioned model and his definition of the basic contradiction of any psyche. But this remains a rather poor psychology when compared with the great psychologists, the forefather of which was Freud.

A last group of theories which can be of some interest for historical materialism are those which can be grouped under the heading of the interactionist approach. These are various. For example, George H. Mead's symbolic interactionist approach, social constructionism, all have a common understanding of the individual. Vivian Burr's empathetic survey may be used to characterize this approach. "The self is no longer the private property of the individual, located in cognitive structures, genetic material or personality traits but a fragile and fluid construction negotiated in partnership with others in social interaction." (2002: 71). As can be noted from the citation, what is important is the set of social relations. Individual awareness is not the source of these relations; on the contrary, it is simply the result. Mead is the pioneer of this approach. "For Mead, the self does not pre-exist society, it emerges from it." (2002: 17) "Mead's individual does not exist independently of society but is instead made possible by social interactions between people. And the key to the development of mind is something distinctly human; our ability to use symbols to represent things and events, especially our use of language." (2002: 18)

These theories are not all in agreement on the primary social source of the individual mind. "For some of these accounts, the social context is the group or groups to which we belong (or aspire to), for others it is our interpersonal relationships and the everyday interactions in which we take part, and for others again it is the wider cultural representations and linguistic structures from which our talk and thinking derives." (2002: 148) Many of these theories contain interesting insights concerning the construction of the individual mind. In this respect they complement Piaget's theory. Piaget concentrates on the experiences of the newly born individual with his/her environment. What is important for him is not the cultural variety but the social constancy of the cognitive structure of the human individual. Whereas, for the interactionists, what is important is to account for the formation of the individual mind through the performance of various roles specific to a given culture. As these two approaches to the genesis of the individual mind have different aims, they supplement each other on many points.

The principal weakness of the interactionist approach is their lack of an encompassing conception of the individual mind. The self, for them, is mainly a symbolic structure. It is all devoted to meanings.¹⁹ Whereas, in reality, the individual psyche is much more than a cognitive device, it is principally a feeling structure. On this point their contribution is very slim. They rightly underscore the importance of social interaction in the building of the individual psyche. But they have little to say on the structure of this psyche. In their own words, the self is a “fragile and fluid construction” mainly set up by the interiorization of social symbols. This is not sufficient to account for, for instance, the structure, the functioning, the contradictions, the drives, the emotions of a uniquely individual psychic system.

CONCLUSION: Dialectical identity of the individual and society

Individuals are the fundamental means of existence of society. They are the most general form of its incarnation. They are not, though, the only form taken by the social. As will be underlined below, society also has other manifestations. The social character of these other means is transparent. So their understanding poses no problem. But the individual form is very misleading. For this reason, the first step in the building of a science of humankind must be a clear-cut, an uncompromising recognition of the exclusively social character of the individual. The individual is social and nothing else. Being social defines her/him totally. There is nothing left out of the realm of this definition.

To start with, the sexual intercourse of a woman and a man resulting in the birth of a new human individual is something totally different from the mating of two animals. Apart from the prohibition of intercourse between mother and son or between father and daughter, there are scores of rules, interdictions, traditions, and formally prescribed unions surrounding the coupling of two humans. In short, even the production of a new individual is a totally social event. The genome of the new individual being a combination of her/his parents' genomes, the genetic structure of the new individual is also a social product. Besides, as already noted the tiny genetic difference of the human species from chimpanzees or orangutans, is not the result of biological evolution as such, but of a biological selection induced by social factors. In other words, the human species, in its specificity, is the product of social evolution. The way of life of the mother during pregnancy, feeding habits, prohibitions, activities encouraged, permitted or forbidden, are totally determined by the cultural conventions in which the mother lives. The fashion of the very act of birth-giving is also socially determined. Immediately after birth, breast feeding periods, the swaddling of the baby, sleeping time, the cradle, the sharing of the room with parents, existence of toilet training, its stages, and an infinity of other details making up for the education of the new individual are all social matters without exception. One of the most basic human characteristics, namely bipedalism, is also a purely social product. It would be needless to underline the social character of talking, of acquisition of a particular language by the newly born. But, it must not be forgotten that babies cut from their social environment are even unable to learn to walk as humans do. From the moment the infant stands on her two feet, in all the stages until adulthood, including puberty, training in order to prepare her to her future social role, the inculcation of the various aspects of the particular culture to which she belongs, every major or minor characteristic of a human being are all acquired through social

¹⁹ In this view, self and mind are essentially synonymous thus not leaving much room to feelings in the self. This conception is openly stated by George H. Mead, the pioneer of symbolic interactionism: “Self-consciousness, rather than affective experience with its motor accompaniments, provides the core and primary structure of the self, which is thus essentially a cognitive rather than an emotional phenomenon,” (1934: 173)

intercourse. In short, not only as species, but as individuals as well, all humans are from top to bottom totally social products. The organism is merely the location of the social interaction which realizes this implementation by impregnating the organism. The soul or the psyche is the individual corporeal form taken by this imprinting. This does not make the body unimportant. On the contrary it is the irretrievable bearer of all which is human. But to jump from there to the conclusion that the body is the foundation of humanity is a misconception of epic proportions.

The body is our natural part. But as Marx puts it, for humanity, natural means social: “The *human* aspect of nature exists only for *social* man; for only then nature exist for him as a *bond* with man -as his existence for the other and the other’s existence for him- and as the life-element of human reality. Only then does nature exist as the *foundation* of his own human nature. Only here has what is to him his *natural* existence become his *human* existence, and nature become man for him. Thus *society* is the complete unity of man with nature -the true resurrection of nature- the consistent naturalism of man and the consistent humanism of nature.”²⁰ The natural body becomes human only by being social. This sociality is so much the specificity of the human species that it is manifest in singular activities as well. Sociality does not mean that humans have or are to do everything together. In Marx’ words: ”Social activity and social enjoyment exist by no means only in the form of some directly communal activity and directly communal enjoyment, But also when I am active *scientifically*, etc. -an activity which I can seldom perform in direct community with others- then my activity is *social*, because I perform it as a man. Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is given the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being.” This dialectical identity of the individual and the social is reiterated time and again by Marx: “Man’s individual and species-life are not *different*, however much -and this is inevitable- the mode of existence of the individual is a more *particular* or more general mode of life of the species, or the life of the species is a more *particular* or more general individual life.”

Apart from individuals, sociality is born by many other objects. This must be kept in mind to eschew the clearly ill-thought out conception of envisaging society as a bunch of naked humans. This would reiterate the widespread trap luring us in the search of an invariant human nature. Humans are bestowed with an innumerable stock of social artifacts, accumulated since the dawn of humanity and replenished with every new generation. All the means of material and spiritual production, all the material and spiritual wealth accumulated over thousands of years are embodied not only in human bodies and minds, but also in an infinite number of material and spiritual objects. From ruins to museums, from gardens, castles, libraries to artistic or philosophical traditions, from languages to religions, sociality has provided itself with an immense variety and wealth of incarnations. All these means are partly embodied in individuals, and for the rest they are outside their bodies and minds, but within their reach. It is this that makes humans human individuals. In other words, individuals as social beings are always part of social structures, and these structures are, as indicated above, composed not only of individuals living under definite conditions, but also of diverse material and spiritual means. Society is identical to the mass of its individuals, only if it is well understood that these individuals already possess in themselves and in their means all the social wealth.

²⁰ This citation, as well as the already given striking definition of humankind as “*the social being*”, and also other citations given in the present paragraph are all taken from the most stimulating third subsection of the *Private Property and Communism* section of the *Third Manuscript* of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. All the stresses are in the original.

One of the most promising approaches to the handling of the inseparable individual-social couple is to analyze it according to Hegel's understanding of dialectical identity. Marx has masterfully used this approach on various occasions. His handling of the production-consumption couple has been given as an example above. The analysis proceeds on three levels in this approach. At the first level, the two sides of the identity are examined as the two facets of the same reality. At the second level, the two poles are considered as each other's instrument of realization. With this aim, the two sides are torn apart and their particularities are further investigated on their own. At the third level, the identity is reconstructed, but not as direct identity but as a mediated one. The aim of this third level is to find out the mediations through which the particularities of each pole are realized, the specific mechanisms bonding the peculiarities of each pole to one another.

For the analysis of the individual-social couple, the first level acts fundamentally as a warning against the pitfalls of different approaches and helps in setting the problem on firm ground. This ground must infallibly support the indissolubility of the couple under investigation. The second level scrutinizes the specificities of the individual and the social with the aim of showing that they are the instruments of realization for each other. This signifies that the goal here is the establishment of the general theory of the individual-social couple. As outlined in this article historical materialism provides the best theoretical framework for the deciphering of this problem. But, when it comes to the scrutiny of the individual pole, historical materialism is far from being as successful as it is for the social pole.

To complete the second level of analysis, historical materialism must supplement itself with elements taken from other theories. On this ground two sets of approaches look promising. The first takes the human body as the fundamental reality in solving the riddle of the individual, whereas the second bases itself on the individual psyche. The solid ground adopted at the first level of dialectical analysis permits historical materialism to protect itself against all theories starting from the body. This is the main pitfall in human studies and historical materialism is well armed to keep itself well away from this fundamentally mistaken approach. Then, the only remaining resource is the second approach. Freud and Piaget are the two most prominent theorists within this approach. As researcher of the genesis of the invariable components of the individual cognitive structures, Piaget is yet unsurpassed in essence. His theory should be integrated within historical materialism without any heavy reassessment. But as a theoretician of the mind, Piaget explains only a minor part of the soul, whereas the psyche is overwhelmingly a feeling system. And the most outstanding theoretician of this aspect of human reality is undoubtedly Freud.

Freud cannot be ignored, discarded or even minimized in any endeavor to decipher the individual soul. He is the true founder of psychology and full credit must be given to him for his epoch-making discoveries. Freud is the first theoretician to establish the psyche as a particular system, endowed with energy, having peculiar structures and functions, compelled to preserve a minimum of equilibrium, and particular evolving mechanisms when this equilibrium is threatened. But Freud made enormous mistakes. His greatest one was his inability to disentangle himself from the biological bias of all his education, reflecting the bias of the predominant scientific outlook of his epoch. So, instead of viewing the psyche -and thus society- as determining the body, he endeavored to do the opposite and explain the psyche with the aid of biological drives. This inevitably drove him to the conception of an invariant psychic system, and thus to the acceptance of a permanent human nature. In short he fell into the trap set by the first approach, that of the heralders of the primacy of the body. This in turn drove him into a totally mistaken view of history, considered as the changing scenery of an unchanging drama, whereas in reality history makes the drama. Nevertheless, Freud's theory is not irrecoverable; on the contrary, he is indispensable. His theory of the

psyche must be divested of all naturalism and firmly placed within a truly historical framework. This means concretely that there are no invariable drives, such as the sexual drive, to explain individual behavior in all epochs. For each specific society, the task of the researcher must be to find out which biological drives, if any, are pushed to the fore, and be made functioning as the main determinant of individual behavior. This also implies that the content of the unconscious will differ according to each culture. The same holds for the super-ego. The ego itself will be very different according to the level of development attained by a particular society. An advanced culture offering diverse and contradictory paths of development to the individual will evidently foster a much more developed ego than a primitive society restricted by rigidly binding rules. Again, all individuals in all societies will develop defense mechanisms as brilliantly established by Freud for our own culture. But the nature and functioning of these mechanisms will be determined by the social environment. Thus, it would be misleading to search for Freud's defense mechanisms in all societies and in all epochs, but it would be foolish not to follow Freud's path in investigating the particular defense mechanisms of a given society. For Freud was thoroughly right in defining these mechanisms as the golden keys to the understanding of individual behavior. In short, at the second level of analysis of the dialectical identity of the individual-social couple, a corrected Freud and some of his followers like Karen Horney, are the main sources which must be incorporated by historical materialism in order to enable itself to make a meaningful contribution at this level.

Coming now to the third level of analysis, to the uncovering of the specific mediations linking the individual and social poles of the dichotomy, where does historical materialism stand? There are a few conclusions which can be singled out from all that has been said above. First, as there is no society in general, there is no individual in general. So the theory of the individual must be elaborated along with the theory of the social, for every particular society. Second, the level of abstractness/concreteness aimed at in a theoretical exploration depends on the theorist's choice. A more general theory is not more or less scientific than a less general theory. But this choice matters for the selection of conceptual tools which must be ever more concrete the more circumscribed the object of study. An example from Marx to highlight this would be that "surplus-production" suffices for historical materialism, but is not enough when it comes to the study of the capitalist mode of production where it has to be specified as "surplus-value", and this in turn will not suffice for the study of the banking system where it must take the form of "interest", and this in its turn will be inaccurate if the object of study is a specific banking system where the banks are making profit not only in the form of interest, but also as landowners or as mine owners, or factory owners, and this again will be insufficient when it comes to the investigation of a specific bank which derives its principal revenue from illicit drug trafficking. To sum up, the individual-society couple will need a different set of conceptual tools, according to the level of abstractness/concreteness selected. Third, historical materialism must be attentive to the level of abstractness-concreteness when it integrates other theories. For example, the integration of Piaget does not create any problem as it is at the same level of abstractness-concreteness as historical materialism, whereas Freud, Bourdieu, or Sève must first be trimmed, as what they said is related to a relatively more concrete theoretical level than historical materialism.

When exploring the individual-social couple at its most abstract level historical materialism must first determine the nature of the predominant mode of production. This mode of production will determine its individuals according to their situation in the relations of production, and also according to the level of development of the productive forces, as the worker is always the most important productive force. Moreover all the superstructures of this mode of production will be conditioned by it, but the result of each conditioning will depend on the nature of the superstructure involved. The impact of all the structures on the individual

will depend on the roles she assumes. But in any case, both in infancy and in later years, the principal active determinant of individual feeling and thinking will be the set of face-to-face relations surrounding any individual. These relations themselves will vary in effectiveness according to the intimacy of the bond linking one person to another. The result of structural determination on the individual, will be psychic comfort or discomfort. Basic psychic well-being, if analyzed at the most abstract level, depends on two conditions. The first and by far the most important one is integration within society, because rejection means death. The second one is recognition of the particularity of each individuality. Not only rejection but being swallowed up can also be unbearable for the individual in specific circumstances, and according to the level of development of society. Thus the balance between these two requirements will decree the degree of psychic comfort of the individual. On the other hand, the result of individual determination on the structure will be a structural activity whose impact on social life will vary according to the position of this specific structure within society.

Adherence to solely this level of abstraction might not present much interest as the subject under study is too vast. So the validity of the historical materialist approach must be tested on a more circumscribed level. Limiting the object of study will mean practically selecting an object closer either to the social or to the individual pole of the individual-society dichotomy. If the object selected for study is close to the social pole, historical materialism must complement itself with conceptual tools brought to the fore by cultural psychology, by Bourdieu, and by other similar theoretical endeavors not mentioned in this article. If the object chosen is, so to speak, at equal distance from the two poles, Sève's theory, as well as various interactionist conceptual tools will be useful, with again other approaches not mentioned here. If, on the contrary, one chooses to study the individual in her intimate relationships then Piaget, and specially Freud and some of his followers, as well as other endeavors not mentioned here are the principal sources to reach for. Of course, as already underlined, all these sources must be more or less corrected, trimmed and reassessed in order to integrate them with historical materialism in an harmonious manner.

Finally, as the carrying on of the third level of analysis of the individual-social couple concretely means the elaboration of a new encompassing theory accounting not only for the two poles but also for their formation, structuring, functioning through an incessant pattern of relations with the other pole, this inevitably necessitates a very long, sustained and collective effort. For my part, I modestly pursue my attempt to contribute somehow to a better understanding of the individual pole of the dichotomy. I would like to hope that the general framework proposed in this article may help in integrating into historical materialism the vast amount of valuable research already accomplished outside it, and may eventually stimulate new research.

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