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The Concept of the Ideal

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Before discussing the *concept* itself we must first consider the *terms* "ideal" and "ideality", that is to say, we must first define the range of phenomena to which these terms may be applied, without analysing the essence of these phenomena at this point.

Even this is not an easy task because usage in general, and scientific usage in particular, is always something derivative of that very "understanding of the essence of the question" whose exposition our definition is intended to serve. The difficulty is by no means peculiar to the given case. It arises whenever we discuss fairly complex matters regarding which there is no generally accepted interpretation and, consequently, no clear definition of the limits of the object under discussion. In such cases discussion on the point at issue turns into an argument about the "meaning of the term", the limits of a particular designation and, hence, about the formal attributes of phenomena that have to be taken into consideration in a theoretical examination of the essence of the question.

Returning to the subject of the "ideal", it must be acknowledged that the word "ideal" is used today mainly as a synonym for "conceivable", as the name for phenomena that are "immanent in the consciousness", phenomena that are represented, imagined or thought. If we accept this fairly stable connotation, it follows that there is no point in talking about any "ideality" of phenomena existing outside human consciousness. Given this definition, everything that exists "outside the consciousness" and is perceived as existing outside it is a material and only a material object.

At first sight this use of the term seems to be the only reasonable one. But this is only at first sight.

Of course, it would be absurd and quite inadmissible from the standpoint of any type of materialism to talk about anything "ideal" where no thinking individual ("thinking" in the sense of "mental" or "brain" activity) is involved. "Ideality" is a category inseparably linked with the notion that human culture, human life activity is purposeful and, therefore, includes the activity of the human brain, consciousness and will. This is axiomatic and Marx, when contrasting his position regarding the "ideal" to Hegel's view, writes that the ideal is "nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought". [*Capital*, Afterword.]

It does not follow from this, however, that in the language of modern materialism the term "ideal" equals "existing in the consciousness", that it is the name reserved for phenomena located in the head, in the brain tissue, where, according to the ideas of modern science, "consciousness" is realised.

In *Capital* Marx defines the *form of value in general* as "purely ideal" not on the grounds that it exists only "in the consciousness", only in the head of the commodity-owner, but on quite opposite grounds. The price or the money form of value, like any form of value in general, is **ideal** because it is totally distinct

from the palpable, corporeal form of commodity in which it is *presented,* we read in the chapter on "Money". [*Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 98-99.]

In other words, the form of value is **ideal**, although it exists outside human consciousness and independently of it.

This use of the term may perplex the reader who is accustomed to the terminology of popular essays on materialism and the relationship of the material to the "ideal". The ideal that exists outside people's heads and consciousness, as something completely objective, a reality of a special kind that is independent of their consciousness and will, invisible, impalpable and sensuously imperceptible, may seem to them something that is only "imagined", something "suprasensuous".

The more sophisticated reader may, perhaps, suspect Marx of an unnecessary flirtation with Hegelian terminology, with the "semantic tradition" associated with the names of Plato, Schelling and Hegel, typical representatives of "objective idealism", i.e., of a conception according to which the "ideal" exists as a special world of incorporeal entities ("ideas") that is outside and independent of man. He will be inclined to reproach Marx for an unjustified or "incorrect" use of the term "ideal", of Hegelian "hypostatisation" of the phenomena of the consciousness and other mortal sins, quite unforgivable in a materialist.

But the question is not so simple as that. It is not a matter of terminology at all. But since terminology plays a most important role in science, Marx uses the term "ideal" in a sense that is close to the "Hegelian" interpretation just because it contains far more meaning than does the popular pseudo-materialistic understanding of the ideal as a phenomenon of consciousness, as a purely mental function. The point is that intelligent (dialectical) idealism – the idealism of Plato and Hegel – is far nearer the truth than popular materialism of the superficial and vulgar type (what Lenin called silly materialism). In the Hegelian system, even though in inverted form, the fact of the dialectical transformation of the ideal into the material and vice versa was theoretically expressed, a fact that was never suspected by "silly" materialism, which had got stuck on the crude – undialectical – opposition of "things outside the consciousness" to "things inside the consciousness", of the "material" to the "ideal".

The "popular" understanding of the ideal cannot imagine what insidious traps the dialectics of these categories has laid for it in the given case.

Marx, on the other hand, who had been through the testing school of Hegelian dialectics, discerned this flaw of the "popular" materialists. His materialism had been enriched by all the achievements of philosophical thought from Kant to Hegel. This explains the fact that in the Hegelian notion of the ideal structure of the universe existing outside the human head and outside the consciousness, he was able to see not simply "idealistic nonsense", not simply a philosophical version of the religious fairy-tales about God (and this is all that vulgar materialism sees in the Hegelian conception), but an idealistically inverted description of the actual relationship of the "mind to Nature", of the "ideal to the material", of "thought to being". This also found its expression in terminology.

We must, therefore, briefly consider the history of the term "ideal" in the development of German classical philosophy from Kant to Hegel, and the moral that the "intelligent" (i.e., dialectical) materialist Marx was able to draw from this history.

It all began when the founder of German classical philosophy, Immanuel Kant, took as his point of departure the "popular" interpretation of the concepts of the "ideal" and the "real" without suspecting what pitfalls he had thus prepared for himself.

It is notable that in his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant does not formulate his understanding of "ideality", but uses this term as a ready-made predicate requiring no special explanation when he is defining space and time and speaking of their "transcendental *ideality*". This means that "things" possess space-time determinacy only in the consciousness and thanks to the consciousness, but not in themselves, outside and before their appearance in the consciousness. Here "ideality" is clearly understood as a synonym for the "pure" and the a priori nature of *consciousness as such,* with no external connections. Kant attaches no other meaning to the term "ideality".

On the other hand, the "material" element of cognition is achieved by sensations, which assure us of the *existence* (and only that!) of things *outside consciousness*. Thus, all we know about "things in themselves" is that they "exist". The ideal is what exists exclusively in the consciousness and thanks to the activity of the consciousness. And conversely, that which exists only in consciousness is characterised as the "ideal". All clear and simple. A perfectly popular distinction. And what it amounts to is that none of the facts we know and are aware of in things – their colour, geometrical form, taste, causal interdependence – may be attributed to the things themselves. All these are merely attributes provided by our own organisation, and not those of the things. In other words, the "ideal" is everything that we know about the world except the bare fact of its "existence", its "being outside consciousness". The latter is non-ideal and, therefore, inaccessible to consciousness and knowledge, transcendental, alien, and awareness of the fact that things, apart from anything else, also "exist" (outside the consciousness) adds nothing whatever to *our knowledge* of them. And it is this interpretation that Kant illustrates with his famous example of the talers. It is one thing, he writes, to have a hundred talers in one's pocket, and quite another thing to have them only in one's consciousness, only in imagination, only in dreams (i.e., from the standpoint of popular usage, only "ideal" talers).

In Kant's philosophy this example plays an extremely important role as one of the arguments against the so-called "ontological proof of the existence of God". His argument runs as follows. It cannot be inferred from the existence of an object *in the consciousness* that the object exists *outside the consciousness*. God exists in people's consciousness but it does not follow from this that God exists "in fact", outside consciousness. After all, there are all kinds of things in people's consciousness! Centaurs, witches, ghosts, dragons with seven heads ...

With this example, however, Kant gets himself into a very difficult position. In fact, in a neighbouring country where the currency was not talers but rubles or francs it would have been simply explained to him that he had in his pocket not "real talers" but only pieces of paper with symbols carrying an obligation only for Prussian subjects. ... However, if one acknowledges as "real" only what is authorised by the decrees of the Prussian king and affirmed by his signature and seal, Kant's example proves what Kant wanted it to prove. If, on the other hand, one has a somewhat wider notion of the "real" and the "ideal", his example proves just the opposite. Far from refuting, it actually affirms that very "ontological proof" which Kant declared to be a typical example of the erroneous inferring of the existence of a prototype outside the consciousness from the existence of the type in the consciousness.

“The contrary is true. Kant’s example might have enforced the ontological proof,” wrote Marx, who held a far more radical atheistic position than Kant in relation to “God”. And he went on: “Real talers have the same existence that the imagined gods have. Has a real taler any existence except in the imagination, if only in the general or rather common imagination of man? Bring paper money into a country where this use of paper is unknown, and everyone will laugh at your subjective imagination.”

The reproach aimed at Kant does not, of course, derive from a desire to change the meaning of the terms “ideal” and “real” after the Hegelian fashion. Marx bases his argument on realisation of the fact that a philosophical system which denotes as “real” everything that man perceives as a thing existing outside his own consciousness, and “ideal” everything that is not perceived in the form of such a thing, cannot draw critical distinctions between the most fundamental illusions and errors of the human race.

It is quite true that the “real talers” are in no way different from the gods of the primitive religions, from the crude fetishes of the savage who worships (precisely as his “god”!) an absolutely real and actual piece of stone, a bronze idol or any other similar “external object”. The savage does not by any means regard the object of his worship as *a symbol* of “God”; for him this object in all its crude sensuously perceptible corporeality is God, God himself, and no mere “representation” of him.

The very essence of fetishism is that it attributes to the object in its immediately perceptible form properties that in fact do not belong to it and have nothing in common with its sensuously perceptible external appearance.

When such an object (stone or bronze idol, etc.) ceases to be regarded as “God himself” and acquires the meaning of an “external symbol” of this God, when it is perceived not as the immediate *subject* of the action ascribed to it, but merely as a “symbol” of something else outwardly in no way resembling the symbol, then man’s consciousness takes a step forward on the path to understanding the essence of things.

For this reason Kant himself and Hegel, who is completely in agreement with him on this point, consider the Protestant version of Christianity to be a higher stage in the development of the religious consciousness than the archaic Catholicism, which had, indeed, not progressed very far from the primitive fetishism of the idol-worshippers. The very thing that distinguishes the Catholic from the Protestant is that the Catholic tends to take everything depicted in religious paintings and Bible stories *literally,* as an exact representation of events that occurred in “the external world” (God as a benevolent old man with a beard and a shining halo round his head, the birth of Eve as the actual conversion of Adam’s rib into a human being, etc., etc.). The Protestant, on the other hand, seeing “idolatry” in this interpretation, regards such events as allegories that have an “internal”, purely ideal, moral meaning.

The Hegelians did, in fact, reproach Kant for playing into the hands of Catholic idolatry with his example of the talers, for arguing against his own Protestant sympathies and attitudes because the “external talers” (the talers in his pocket) were only symbols in the “general or rather common imagination of man”, were only representatives (forms of external expression, embodiment) of the “spirit”, just as religious paintings, despite their sensuously perceptible reality, were only images produced by human social self-consciousness, by the human spirit. In their essence they were entirely ideal, although in their existence they were

substantial, material and were located, of course, outside the human head, outside the consciousness of the individual, outside individual mental activity with its transcendental mechanisms.

"Gods" and "talers" are phenomena of the same order, Hegel and the Hegelians declared, and by this comparison the problem of the "ideal" and its relationship to the "real", to the materially substantial world was posited in a way quite different from that of Kant. It was associated with the problem of "alienation", with the question of "reification" and "de-reification", of man's "re-assimilation" of objects created by himself, objects that through the action of some mysterious processes had been transformed into a world not only of "external" *objective* formations but formations that were also hostile to man.

Hence comes the following interpretation of Kant's problem: "The proofs of the existence of God are either mere *hollow tautologies*. Take for instance the ontological proof. This only means: 'that which I conceive for myself in a real way *(realiter*) is a real concept for me', something that works on me. In this sense *all gods,* the pagan as well as the Christian ones, have possessed a real existence. Did not the ancient Moloch reign? Was not the Delphic Apollo a real power in the life of the Greeks? Kant's critique means nothing in this respect. If somebody imagines that he has a hundred talers, if this concept is not for him an arbitrary, subjective one, if he believes in it, then these hundred imagined talers have for him the same value as a hundred real ones. For instance, he will incur debts on the strength of his imagination, his imagination will *work, in the same way as all humanity has incurred debts on its gods.*

When the question was posited in this way the category of the "ideal" acquired quite a different meaning from that given to it by Kant, and this was by no means due to some terminological whim of Hegel and the Hegelians. It expressed the obvious fact that social consciousness is not simply the many times repeated individual consciousness (just as the social organism in general is not the many times repeated individual human organism), but is, in fact, a historically formed and historically developing system of "objective notions", forms and patterns of the "objective spirit", of the "collective reason" of *mankind* (or more directly, "the people" with its inimitable spiritual culture), all this being quite independent of individual caprices of consciousness or will. This system comprises all the general moral norms regulating people's daily lives, the legal precepts, the forms of state-political organisation of life, the ritually legitimised patterns of activity in all spheres, the "rules" of life that must be obeyed by all, the strict regulations of the guilds, and so on and so forth, up to and including the grammatical and syntactical structures of speech and language and the logical norms of reasoning.

All these structural forms and patterns of social consciousness unambiguously oppose the individual consciousness and will as a special, internally organised "reality", as the completely "external" forms determining that consciousness and will. It is a fact that every individual must from childhood reckon far more carefully with demands and restrictions than with the immediately perceptible appearance of external "things" and situations or the organic attractions, desires and needs of his individual body.

It is equally obvious that all these externally imposed patterns and forms cannot be identified in the individual consciousness as "innate" patterns. They are all *assimilated* in the course of upbringing and education – that is, in the course of the individual's assimilation of the intellectual culture that is available and that took shape before him, without him and independently of him – as the patterns

and forms of *that* culture. These are no "immanent" forms of individual mental activity. They are the forms of the "other", external "subject" that it assimilates.

This is why Hegel sees the main advantage of Plato's teaching in the fact that the question of the relationship of "spirit" to "nature" is for the first time posited not on the narrow basis of the relations of the "individual soul" to "everything else", but on the basis of an investigation of the universal (social-collective) "world of ideas" as opposed to the "world of things". In Plato's doctrine "...the reality of the spirit, insofar as it is opposed to nature, is presented in its highest truth, presented as the organisation of a state".

Here it must be observed that by the term "state" Plato understood not only the political and legal superstructure, but also the sum-total of social rules regulating the life of individuals within an organised society, the "polis", or any similar formation, everything that is now implied by the broader term "culture".

It is from Plato, therefore, that the tradition arises of examining the *world of ideas* (he, in fact, gives us the concept of the "ideal world") as a stable and internally organised world of laws, rules and patterns controlling the individual's mental activity, the "individual soul", as a special, supernatural "objective reality" standing in opposition to every individual and imperatively dictating to the individual how he should act in any given situation. The immediate "external" force determining the conduct of the individual is the "state", which protects the whole system of spiritual culture, the whole system of rights and obligations of every citizen.

Here, in a semi-mystical, semi-mythological form was clearly established a perfectly real fact, the fact of the dependence of the mental (and not only mental) activity of the individual on the system of culture established before him and completely independently of him, a system in which the "spiritual life" of every individual begins and runs its course.

The question of the relationship of the "ideal" to the "substantially material" was here presented as a question of the relationship of these stable forms (patterns, stereotypes) of culture to the world of "individual things", which included not only "external things", but also the physical body of man himself.

As a matter of fact, it was only here that the necessity arose for a clear definition of the category of "ideality" as opposed to the undifferentiated, vague notion of the "psyche" in general, which might equally well be interpreted as a wholly corporeal function of the physically interpreted " soul", no matter to what organ this function was actually ascribed – heart, liver or brain. Otherwise, "ideality" remains a superfluous and completely unnecessary verbal label for the "psychic". This is what it was before Plato, the term "idea" being used, even by Democritus, to designate a completely substantial form, the geometrical outlines of a "thing", a body, which was quite physically impressed on man, in the physical body of his eyes. This usage which was characteristic of the early, naive form of materialism cannot, of course, be used by the materialism of today, which takes into consideration all the complexity of the relationships between individual mental activity and the "world of things".

For this reason in the vocabulary of modern materialistic psychology (and not only philosophy) the category of "ideality" or the "ideal" defines not mental activity in general, but only a certain phenomenon connected, of course, with mental activity, but by no means merging with it.

"*Ideality* mainly characterises the idea or image insofar as they, becoming objectivised in words" [entering into the system of socially evolved knowledge

which for the individual is something that is given for him. – E.V.I.], "in objective reality, thus acquire a relative independence, separating themselves, as it were, from the mental activity of the individual," writes the Soviet psychologist S. L. Rubinstein.

Only in this interpretation does the category of "ideality" become a specifically meaningful definition of a certain category of phenomena, establishing the form of the process of reflection of objective reality in mental activity, which is social and human in its origin and essence, in the social-human consciousness, and ceases to be an unnecessary synonym for mental activity in general.

With reference to the quotation from S. L. Rubinstein's book it need only be observed that the image is objectivised not only in words, and may enter into the system of socially evolved knowledge not only in its verbal expression. The image is objectivised just as well (and even more directly) in sculptural, graphic and plastic forms and in the form of the routine-ritual ways of dealing with things and people, so that it is expressed not only in words, in speech and language, but also in drawings, models and such symbolic objects as coats of arms, banners, dress, utensils, or as money, including gold coins and paper money, IOUs, bonds or credit notes.

"Ideality" in general is in the historically formed language of philosophy a characteristic of the *materially established (objectivised,* materialised, reified) *images of human social culture,* that is, the historically formed modes of human social life, which confront the individual possessing consciousness and will as a special "supernatural" objective reality, as a special *object* comparable with material reality and situated on one and the same spatial plane (and hence often identified with it).

For this reason, purely for the sake of terminological accuracy, it is pointless to apply this definition to purely individual mental states at any given moment. The latter, with all their individually unique whims and variations, are determined in effect by the numerous interconnections of the most diverse factors up to and including transient states of the organism and the peculiar features of its biochemical reactions (such as allergy or colour-blindness, for instance), and, therefore, may be considered on the plane of social-human culture as purely accidental.

This is why we find Kant talking about the "ideality of space and time", but not about the "ideality" of the conscious sensations of weight, for instance, in the muscles of the arm when one is carrying something; about the "ideality" of the chain of cause and effect, but not about the ideality of the fact that a rock with the sun shining on it becomes warmer (although this fact is also consciously perceived). In Kant "ideality" becomes a synonym for the "transcendental character" of universal forms of sensuousness and reason, that is, patterns of cognitive activity that are inherent in every "self" and thus have a completely impersonal character and display, moreover, a compulsive force in relation to each separate ("empirical") "self". This is why space and time, causal dependence and "beauty" are for Kant "ideal", while they are not mental states connected with the unique and transitory physical states of the individual's body. Admittedly, as we have seen in the example of the "talers", Kant does not always adhere strictly to his terminology, although the reason for this is certainly not carelessness (it would be difficult to reproach Kant for that), but rather the dialectical trickiness of the problems that he raises. But despite the instability of the terminological definition of the categories, their objective dialectical content begins to show through – the very content that the Hegelian school provides

with a far more adequate definition. The point is that Kant could not fully overcome the notion of "social consciousness" ("universal spirit") as the many times repeated individual consciousness.

In Hegelian philosophy, however, the problem was stated in a fundamentally different way. The social organism (the "culture" of the given people) is by no means an abstraction expressing the "sameness" that may be discovered in the mentality of every individual, an "abstract" inherent in each individual, the "transcendentally psychological" pattern of individual life activity. The historically built up and developing forms of the "universal spirit" ("the spirit of the people", the "objective spirit"), although still understood by Hegel as certain stable patterns within whose framework the mental activity of every individual proceeds, are none the less regarded by him not as formal abstractions, not as abstractly universal "attributes" inherent in every individual, taken separately. Hegel (following Rousseau with his distinction between the "general will" and the "universal will") fully takes into account the obvious fact that in the diverse collisions of differently orientated "individual wills" certain results are born and crystallised which were never contained in any of them separately, and that because of this *social consciousness* as an "entity" is certainly not built up, as of bricks, from the "sameness" to be found in each of its "parts" (individual selves, individual consciousnesses). And this is where we are shown the path to an understanding of the fact that all the patterns which Kant defined as "transcendentally inborn" forms of operation of the individual mentality, as a priori "internal mechanisms" inherent in every mentality, are actually forms of the self-consciousness of *social man assimilated from without* by the individual (originally they opposed him as "external" patterns of the movement of culture independent of his will and consciousness), social man being understood as the historically developing "aggregate of all social relations".

It is these forms of the organisation of social (collectively realised) human life activity that exist *before, outside and completely independently* of the individual mentality, in one way or another materially established in language, in ritually legitimised customs and rights and, further, as "the organisation of a state" with all its material attributes and organs for the protection of the traditional forms of life that stand in opposition to the individual (the physical body of the individual with his brain, liver, heart, hands and other organs) as an entity organised "in itself and for itself", as something ideal within which all individual things acquire a different meaning and play a different role from that which they had played "as themselves", that is, outside this entity. For this reason the "ideal" definition of any thing, or the definition of any thing as a "disappearing" moment in the movement of the "ideal world", coincides in Hegel with the role and meaning of this thing in social human culture, in the context of socially organised human life activity, and not in the individual consciousness, which is here regarded as something derived from the "universal spirit".

It will readily be appreciated how much broader and more profound such a positing of the question is in comparison with any conception that designates as "ideal" everything that is "in the consciousness of the individual", and "material" or "real", everything that is outside the consciousness of the individual, everything that the given individual is *not conscious of,* although this "everything" does exist in reality, and thus draws between the "ideal" and the "real" a fundamentally dividing line which turns them into "different worlds" that have "nothing in common" with each other. It is clear that, given such a

metaphysical division and delimitation, the "ideal" and the "material" cannot and must not be regarded as *opposites*. Here they are "different", and that is all.

Hegel proceeds from the quite obvious fact that for the consciousness of the individual the "real" and even the "crudely material" – certainly not the "ideal" – is at first the whole grandiose *materially established spiritual culture of the human race,* within which and by the assimilation of which this individual awakens to "self-consciousness". It is this that confronts the individual as the thought of preceding generations realised ("reified", "objectified", "alienated") in sensuously perceptible "matter" – in language and visually perceptible images, in books and statues, in wood and bronze, in the form of places of worship and instruments of labour, in the designs of machines and state buildings, in the patterns of scientific and moral systems, and so on. All these objects are in their existence, in their "present being" substantial, "material", but in their essence, in their origin they are "ideal", because they "embody" the collective thinking of people, the "universal spirit" of mankind.

In other words, Hegel includes in the concept of the "ideal" everything that another representative of idealism in philosophy (admittedly he never acknowledged himself to be an "idealist") – A. A. Bogdanov – a century later designated as "socially organised experience" with its stable, historically crystallised patterns, standards, stereotypes, and "algorithms". The feature which both Hegel and Bogdanov have in common (as "idealists") is the notion that this world of "socially organised experience" is for the individual the sole "object" which he "assimilates" and "cognises", the sole object with which he has any dealings.

But the world existing before, outside and independently of the consciousness and will *in general* (i.e., not only of the consciousness and will of the *individual* but also of the social consciousness and the socially organised "will"), the world as such, is taken into account by this conception only insofar as it finds expression in universal forms of consciousness and will, insofar as it is already "idealised", already assimilated in "experience", already presented in the patterns and forms of this "experience", already included therein.

By this twist of thought, which characterises idealism in general (whether it is Platonic, Berkeleian, Hegelian or that of Popper), the real material world, existing before, outside and quite independently of "experience" and before being expressed in the forms of this "experience" (including language), is totally removed from the field of vision, and what begins to figure under the designation of the "real world" is an already "idealised" world, a world already assimilated by people, a world already shaped by their activity, the world *as people know it,* as it is presented in the existing forms of their culture. A world already expressed (presented) in the forms of the existing human experience. And this world is declared to be the only world about which anything at all can be said.

This secret of idealism shows up transparently in Hegel's discussion of the "ideality" of natural phenomena, in his presentation of nature as an "ideal" being in itself. Underlying what he has to say about certain natural phenomena is their description in the concepts and terms of the physics of his day: "...because masses push and crush each other and there is no vacuum between them, it is only in this *contact* that the ideality of matter in general begins, and it is interesting to see how this intrinsic character of matter emerges, for in general it is always interesting to see the realisation of a concept." Here Hegel is really speaking not at all about nature as it is, but about nature as it is presented

(described) in the system of a definite physical theory, in the system of its definitions established by its historically formed "language".

It is this fact, incidentally, that explains the persistent survival of such "semantic substitutions"; indeed, when we *are talking* about nature, we are obliged to make use of the available language of natural science, the "language of science" with its established and generally understood "meanings". It is this, specifically, which forms the basis of the arguments of logical positivism, which quite consciously identifies "nature" with the "language" in which people talk and write about nature.

It will be appreciated that the main difficulty and, therefore, the main problem of philosophy is not to distinguish and counterpose everything that is "in the consciousness of the individual" to everything that is outside this individual consciousness (this is hardly ever difficult to do), but to delimit the world of collectively acknowledged notions, that is, the whole socially organised world of intellectual culture with all its stable and materially established universal patterns, and the real world as it exists outside and apart from its expression in these socially legitimised forms of "experience".

It is here and only here that the distinction between the "ideal" and the "real" ("material") acquires a serious scientific meaning because in practice the two are usually confused. Pointing out the fact that the thing and the form of the thing exist outside the individual consciousness and do not depend on individual will still does not solve the problem of their objectivity in its fully materialistic sense. And conversely, by no means all that people do not know, are unaware of, do not perceive as the forms of external things, is invention, the play of the imagination, a notion that exists merely in man's head. It is because of this that the "sensible person", to whose way of thinking Kant appeals with his example of the talers, is more often than not other people deluded into taking the collectively acknowledged notions for objective reality, and the objective reality revealed by scientific research for subjective invention existing only in the heads of the "theoreticians". It is the "sensible person", daily observing the sun rising in the East and setting in the West, who protests that the system of Copernicus is an invention that contradicts the "obvious facts". And in exactly the same way the ordinary person, drawn into the orbit of commodity-money relationships, regards money as a perfectly *material* thing, and value, which in fact finds its external expression in money, as a mere abstraction existing only in the heads of the theoreticians, only "*ideally*".

For this reason consistent materialism, faced with this kind of situation, could not define the "ideal" as that which exists in the consciousness of the individual, and the "material" as that which exists outside this consciousness, as the sensuously perceived form of the external thing, as a real corporeal form. The boundary between the two, between the "material" and the "ideal", between the "thing in itself" and its representation in social consciousness could not pass along this line because, if it did, materialism would be completely helpless when confronted with the dialectics that Hegel had discovered in the relations between the "material" and the "ideal" (particularly, in the phenomena of fetishism of all kinds, from that of religion to that of commodity, and further, the fetishism of words, of language, symbols and signs).

It is a fact that like the icon or the gold coin, any *word* (term or combination of terms) is primarily a "thing" that exists outside the consciousness of the individual, possesses perfectly real bodily properties and is sensuously perceived. According to the old classification accepted by everyone, including

Kant, words clearly come under the category of the "material" with just as much justification as stones or flowers, bread or a bottle of wine, the guillotine or the printing press. Surely then, in contrast to these things, what we call the "ideal" is their subjective image in the head of the individual, in the individual consciousness?

But here we are immediately confronted with the trickiness of this distinction, which is fully provided for by the Hegelian school and its conception of the "materialisation", the "alienation", the "reification" of universal notions. As a result of this process which takes place "behind the back of the individual consciousness", the individual is confronted in the form of an "external thing" with people's general (i.e., collectively acknowledged) *representation,* which has absolutely nothing in common with the sensuously perceived bodily form in which it is "represented".

For example, the name "Peter" is in its sensuously perceived bodily form absolutely unlike the real Peter, the person it designates, or the sensuously represented image of Peter which other people have of him. The relationship is the same between the gold coin and the goods that can be bought with it, goods (commodities), whose universal *representative* is the coin or (later) the banknote. The coin represents *not itself* but "another" in the very sense in which a diplomat represents not his own person but his country, which has authorised him to do so. The same may be said of the word, the verbal symbol or sign, or any combination of such signs and the syntactical pattern of this combination.

This relationship of *representation* is a relationship in which one sensuously perceived thing performs the role or function of representative of quite another thing, and, to be even more precise, the universal nature of that other thing, that is, something "other" which in sensuous, bodily terms is quite unlike it, and it was this relationship that in the Hegelian terminological tradition acquired the title of "ideality".

In *Capital* Marx quite consciously uses the term "ideal" in this formal meaning that it was given by Hegel, and not in the sense in which it was used by the whole pre-Hegelian tradition, including Kant, although the philosophical-theoretical interpretation of the range of phenomena which in both cases is similarly designated "ideal" is diametrically opposed to its Hegelian interpretation. The meaning of the term "ideal" in Marx and Hegel is the same, but the concepts, i.e., the ways of understanding this "same" meaning are profoundly different. After all, the word "concept" in dialectically interpreted logic is a synonym for *understanding of the essence of the matter,* the essence of phenomena which are only outlined by a given term; it is by no means a synonym for "the meaning of the term", which may be formally interpreted as the sum-total of "attributes" of the phenomena to which the term is applied.

It was for this reason that Marx, like any genuine theoretician, preferred not to change the historically formed "meanings of terms", the established nomenclature of phenomena, but, while making strict and rigorous use of it, proposed a quite different *understanding of* these phenomena that was actually the opposite of the traditional understanding.

In *Capital,* when analysing money – that familiar and yet mysterious category of social phenomena – Marx describes as "ideal" nothing more or less than the value-form of the products of labour in general (*die Wertform überhaupt*).

So the reader for whom the term "ideal" is a synonym for the "immanent in the consciousness", "existing only in the consciousness", "only in people's ideas",

only in their "imagination" will misunderstand the idea expressed by Marx because in this case it turns out that even capital – which is nothing else but a *value-form* of the organisation of the productive forces, a form of the functioning of the means of production – also exists only in the consciousness, only in people's subjective imagination, and "not in reality".

Obviously only a follower of Berkeley could take the point in this way, and certainly not a materialist.

According to Marx, the ideality of the form of value consists not, of course, in the fact that this form represents a mental phenomenon existing only in the brain of the commodity-owner or theoretician, but in the fact that the corporeal palpable form of the thing (for example, a coat) is only a form of expression of quite a different "thing" (linen, as a value) with which it has nothing in common. The value of the linen is *represented,* expressed, "embodied" in the form of a coat, and the form of the coat is the "*ideal or represented* form" of the value of the linen.

"As a use-value, the linen is something palpably different from the coat; as value, it is the same as the coat, and now has the appearance of a coat. Thus the linen acquires a value-form different from its physical form. The fact that it is value, is made manifest by its equality with the coat, just as the sheep's nature of a Christian is shown in his resemblance to the Lamb of God." [*Capital,* Vol. I, p. 58.]

This is a completely objective relationship, within which the "bodily form of commodity B becomes the value-form of commodity A, or the body of commodity B acts as a mirror to the value of commodity A", [*Capital,* Vol. I, p. 59.] the authorised representative of its "value" nature, of the "substance" which is "embodied" both here and there.

This is why the form of value or value-form is *ideal,* that is to say, it is something quite different from the palpable form of the thing in which it is *represented,* expressed, "embodied", "alienated".

What is this "other", this difference, which is expressed or represented here? People's consciousness? Their will? By no means. On the contrary, both will and consciousness are determined by this objective ideal form, and the thing that it expresses, "represents" is a definite social relationship between people which in their eyes assumes the fantastic form of a relationship between things.

In other words, what is "represented" here *as a thing* is the form of people's activity, the form of life activity which they perform together, which has taken shape "behind the back of consciousness" and is materially established in the form of the relationship between things described above.

This and only this creates the ideality of such a "thing", its sensuous-supersensuous character.

Here ideal form actually does stand in opposition to individual consciousness and individual will as the *form of the external thing* (remember Kant's talers) and is necessarily perceived precisely as the form of the external thing, not its palpable form, but as the form of another equally palpable thing that it represents, expresses, embodies, differing, however, from the palpable corporeality of both things and having nothing in common with their sensuously perceptible physical nature. What is embodied and "represented" here is a definite form of labour, a definite form of human objective activity, that is to say, the transformation of nature by social man.

It is here that we find the answer to the riddle of "ideality". Ideality, according to Marx, is nothing else but the form of social human activity represented in the thing. Or, conversely, the form of human activity represented *as a thing,* as an object.

"Ideality" is a kind of stamp impressed on the substance of nature by social human life activity, a form of the functioning of the physical thing in the process of this activity. So all the things involved in the social process acquire a new "form of existence" that is not included in their physical nature and differs from it completely – their ideal form.

So, there can be no talk of "ideality" where there are no people socially producing and reproducing their material life, that is to say, individuals working collectively and, therefore, necessarily possessing consciousness and will. But this does not mean that the "ideality of things" is a product of their *conscious will,* that it is "immanent in the consciousness" and exists only in the consciousness. Quite the reverse, the individual's consciousness and will are functions of the ideality of things, their comprehended, *conscious ideality*.

Ideality, thus, has a purely social nature and origin. It is the form of a thing, but it is outside this thing, and in the activity of man, as a *form of this activity*. Or conversely, it is the form of a person's activity but outside this person, *as a form of the thing*. Here, then, is the key to the whole mystery that has provided a real basis for all kinds of idealistic constructions and conceptions both of man and of a world beyond man, from Plato to Carnap and Popper. "Ideality" constantly escapes, slips away from the metaphysically single-valued theoretical fixation. As soon as it is fixed as the "form of the thing" it begins to tease the theoretician with its "immateriality", its "functional" character and appears only as a form of "pure activity". On the other hand, as soon as one attempts to fix it "as such", as purified of all the traces of palpable corporeality, it turns out that this attempt is fundamentally doomed to failure, that after such a purification there will be nothing but phantasmal emptiness, an indefinable vacuum.

And indeed, as Hegel understood so well, it is absurd to speak of "activity" that is not realised in anything definite, is not "embodied" in something corporeal, if only in words, speech, language. If such "activity" exists, it cannot be in reality but only in *possibility*, only potentially, and, therefore, not as activity but as its opposite, as *inactivity,* as the absence of activity.

So, according to Hegel, the "spirit", as something ideal, as something opposed to the world of corporeally established forms, cannot "reflect" at all (i.e., become aware of the forms of its own structure) unless it preliminarily opposes "itself to itself", as an "object", a thing that differs from itself.

When speaking of value-form as the ideal form of a thing, Marx by no means accidentally uses the comparison of the mirror: "In a sort of way, it is with man as with commodities. Since he comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand, nor as a Fichtean philosopher, to whom 'I am I' is sufficient, man first sees and recognises himself in other men. Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by first comparing himself with Paul as being of like kind. And thereby Paul, just as he stands in his Pauline personality, becomes to Peter the type of the genus homo." [*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 59.]

Here Marx plainly indicates the parallel between his theory of the "ideality" of the value-form and Hegel's understanding of "ideality", which takes into account the dialectics of the emergence of the collective self-awareness of the human race. Yes, Hegel understood the situation far more broadly and

profoundly than the "Fichtean philosopher"; he established the fact that "spirit", before it could examine itself, must shed its unblemished purity and phantasmal nature, and must itself turn *into an object* and in the form of this object oppose itself to itself. At first in the form of the Word, in the form of verbal "embodiment", and then in the form of instruments of labour, statues, machines, guns, churches, factories, constitutions and states, in the form of the grandiose "inorganic body of man", in the form of the sensuously perceptible body of civilisation which for him serves only as a glass in which he can examine himself, his "other being", and know through this examination his own "pure ideality", understanding himself as "pure activity". Hegel realised full well that ideality as "pure activity" is not directly given and cannot be given "as such", immediately in all its purity and undisturbed perfection; it can be known only through analysis of its "embodiments", through its reflection in the glass of palpable reality, in the glass of the system of things (their forms and relationships) created by the activity of "pure spirit". By their fruits ye shall know them – and not otherwise.

The ideal forms of the world are, according to Hegel, forms of activity *realised* in some material. If they are not realised in some palpable material, they remain invisible and unknown for the active spirit itself, the spirit cannot become aware of them. In order to examine them they must be "reified", that is, turned into the forms and relations of *things*. Only in this case does ideality *exist,* does it possess *present* being; only as a reified and reifiable form of activity, a form of activity that has become and is becoming the form of an object, a palpable thing outside consciousness, and in no case as a transcendental-psychological pattern of consciousness, not as the internal pattern of the "self", distinguishing itself from itself within itself, as it turned out with the "Fichtean philosopher".

As the internal pattern of the activity of *consciousness,* as a pattern "immanent in the consciousness", ideality can have only an illusory, only a phantasmal existence. It becomes real only in the course of its reification, objectification (and deobjectification), alienation and the sublation of alienation. How much more reasonable and realistic this interpretation was, compared with that of Kant and Fichte, is self-evident. It embraced the actual dialectics of people's developing "self-consciousness", it embraced the actual phases and metamorphoses in whose succession alone the "ideality" of the world exists.

It is for this reason that Marx joins Hegel in respect of terminology, and not Kant or Fichte, who tried to solve the problem of "ideality" (i.e., activity) while remaining "inside consciousness", without venturing into the external sensuously perceptible corporeal world, the world of the palpable forms and relations of things.

This Hegelian definition of the term "ideality" took in the whole range of phenomena within which the "ideal", understood as the *corporeally embodied form of the activity of social* man, really exists.

Without an understanding of this circumstance it would be totally impossible to fathom the miracles performed before man's eyes by the **commodity**, the commodity form of the product, particularly in its money form, in the form of the notorious "real talers", "real rubles", or "real dollars", things which, as soon as we have the slightest theoretical understanding of them, immediately turn out to be not "real" at all, but "ideal" through and through, things whose category quite unambiguously includes *words,* the units of *language,* and many other "things". Things which, while being wholly "material", palpable formations, acquire all their "meaning" (function and role) from "spirit" and

even owe to it their specific bodily existence .... Outside spirit and without it there cannot even be *words,* there is merely a vibration of the air.

The mysteriousness of this category of "things", the secret of their "ideality", their sensuous-supersensuous character was first revealed by Marx in the course of his analysis of the commodity (value) form of the product.

Marx characterises the commodity form as an **ideal** form, i.e., as a form that has absolutely nothing in common with the real palpable form of the body in which it is represented (i.e., expressed, materialised, reified, alienated, realised), and by means of which it "exists", possesses "present being".

It is "ideal" because it does not include a single atom of the substance of the body in which it is represented, because it is the form of quite *another body*. And this other body is present here not bodily, materially ("bodily" it is at quite a different point in space), but only once again "ideally", and here there is not a single atom of its substance. Chemical analysis of a gold coin will not reveal a single molecule of boot-polish, and vice versa. Nevertheless, a gold coin represents (expresses) the value of a hundred tins of boot-polish precisely by its weight and gleam. And, of course, this act of representation is performed not in the consciousness of the seller of boot-polish, but outside his consciousness in any "sense" of this word, outside his head, in the space of the market, and without his having even the slightest suspicion of the mysterious nature of the money form and the essence of the price of boot-polish.... Everyone can spend money without knowing what money is.

For this very reason the person who confidently uses his native language to express the most subtle and complex circumstances of life finds himself in a very difficult position if he takes it into his head to *acquire consciousness* of the relationship between the "sign" and the "meaning". The consciousness which he may derive from linguistic studies in the present state of the science of linguistics is more likely to place him in the position of the centipede who was unwise enough to ask himself which foot he steps off on. And the whole difficulty which has caused so much bother to philosophy as well lies in the fact that "ideal forms", like the value-form, the form of thought or syntactical form, have always arisen, taken shape and developed, turned into something objective, completely independent of anyone's consciousness, in the course of processes that occur not at all in the "head", but most definitely outside it – although not without its participation.

If things were different, the "idealism" of Plato and Hegel would, indeed, be a most strange aberration, quite unworthy of minds of such calibre and such influence. The *objectivity* of the "ideal form" is no fantasy of Plato's or Hegel's, but an indisputable and stubborn fact. A fact that such impressive thinkers as Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Einstein, not to mention thousands of lesser spirits, racked their brains over throughout the centuries.

"Idealism" is not a consequence of some elementary mistake committed by a naive schoolboy who saw a terrible ghost that was not there. Idealism is a completely sober statement of the objectivity of ideal form, that is, the fact of its existence in the space of human culture independently of the will and consciousness of individuals – a statement that was, however, left without an adequate scientific explanation.

This statement of the fact without its scientific materialist explanation is what idealism is. In the given case materialism consists precisely in the scientific explanation of this fact and not in ignoring it. Formally this fact looks just as it

was described by the thinkers of the "Platonic line" – a form of movement of physically palpable bodies which is objective despite its obvious incorporeality. An incorporeal form controlling the fate of entirely corporeal forms, determining whether they are to be, or not to be, a form, like some fleshless, and yet all-powerful "soul" of things. A form that preserves itself in the most diverse corporeal embodiments and does not coincide with a single one of them. A form of which it cannot be said **where exactly** it "exists".

A completely rational, non-mystical understanding of the "ideal" (as the "ideal form" of the real, substantially material world) was evolved in general form by Marx in the course of his constructive critical mastering of the Hegelian conception of ideality, and particularised (as the solution to the question of the form of value) through his criticism of political economy, that is to say, of the classical labour theory of value. The ideality of value-form is a typical and characteristic case of ideality in general, and Marx's conception of it serves as a concrete illustration of all the advantages of the dialectical materialist view of ideality, of the "ideal".

Value-form is understood in *Capital* precisely as the reified form (represented as, or "representing", the thing, the relationship of things) of social human life activity. Directly it does present itself to us as the "physically palpable" embodiment of *something "other"*, but this "other" cannot be some physically palpable matter.

The only alternative, it appears, is to assume some kind of *bodiless substance,* some kind of "insubstantial substance". And classical philosophy here proposed a logical enough solution: such a strange "substance" can be only activity – "pure activity", "pure form-creating activity". But in the sphere of economic activity this substance was, naturally, decoded as *labour,* as man's physical labour transforming the physical body of nature, while "value" became *realised* labour, the "embodied" act of labour.

So it was precisely in political economy that scientific thought made its first decisive step towards discovering the essence of "ideality". Already Smith and Ricardo, men fairly far removed from philosophy, clearly perceived the "substance" of the mysterious value definitions in *labour*.

Value, however, though understood from the standpoint of its "substance", remained a mystery with regard to its "form". The classical theory of value could not explain why this substance expressed itself as it did, and not in some other way. Incidentally, the classical bourgeois tradition was not particularly interested in this question. And Marx clearly demonstrated the reason for its indifference to the subject. At all events, deduction of the form of value from its "substance" remained an insuperable task for bourgeois science. The *ideality* of this form continued to be as mysterious and mystical as ever.

However, since the theoreticians found themselves in direct confrontation with the mysterious – physically impalpable – properties of this form, they had recourse again and again to the well-known ways of interpreting "ideality". Hence, the idea of the existence of "ideal atoms of value", which were highly reminiscent of Leibniz's monads, the immaterial and unextended quanta of "spiritual substance".

Marx, as an economist, was helped by the fact that he knew a lot more about philosophy than Smith and Ricardo.

It was when he saw in the Fichtean-Hegelian conception of *ideality as "pure activity"* an abstractly mystifying description of the real, physically palpable

labour of social man, the process of the physical transformation of physical nature performed by man's physical body, that he gained the theoretical key to the riddle of the ideality of value-form.

The value of a thing presented itself as the reified labour of man and, therefore, the *form of value* turned out to be nothing else but the reified *form* of this labour, a form of human life activity.

And the fact that this is by no means *the form of the thing as it is* (i.e., the thing in its natural determinateness) but a *form of social human labour* or of the form-creating activity of social man embodied in the substance of nature – it was this fact that provided the solution to the riddle of *ideality*. The ideal form of a thing is not the form of the thing "in itself", but a form of social human life activity regarded as *the form of a thing*.

And since in its developed stages human life activity always has a purposeful, i.e., consciously willed character, "ideality" presents itself as a *form of consciousness and will,* as the law guiding man's consciousness and will, as the objectively compulsory pattern of consciously willed activity. This is why it turns out to be so easy to portray the "ideal" exclusively as a form of consciousness and self-consciousness, exclusively as the "transcendental" pattern of the psyche and the will that realises this pattern.

And if this is so, the Platonic-Hegelian conception of "ideality" begins to appear as merely an impermissible projection of the forms of consciousness and will (forms of thought) on to the "external world". And the "criticism" of Hegel amounts merely to reproaches for his having "ontologised", "hypostatised" the purely subjective forms of human mental activity. This leads to the quite logical conclusion that all categories of thought ("quantity", "measure", "necessity", "essence", and so on and so forth) are only "ideal", that is, only transcendental-psychological patterns of the subject's activity and nothing else.

Marx, of course, had quite a different conception. According to him all the logical categories without exception are only the *idealised* (i.e., converted into forms of human life activity, activity that is primarily external and sensuously objective, and then also "spiritual"), universal forms of existence of objective reality, of the external world. And, certainly, not projections of the forms of the mental world on to the "physical world". A conception, as can easily be seen, which is just the reverse in the sequence of its "theoretical deduction".

This interpretation of "ideality" is in Marx based, above all, on the materialist understanding of the specific nature of the social human relationship to the world (and the fundamental difference between this and the animals' relationship to the world, the purely biological relationship): "The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is *its life activity*. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness." [Marx, *Estranged Labour*, 1844]

This means that the animal's activity is directed *only* towards external objects. The activity of man, on the other hand, is directed *not only* on them, but also on his own forms of life activity. It is activity directed *upon itself,* what German classical philosophy presented as the specific feature of the "spirit", as "reflection", as "self-consciousness".

In the above passage quoted from Marx's early works he does not emphasise sufficiently the fundamentally important detail that distinguishes his position from the Fichtean-Hegelian interpretation of "reflection" (the relationship to oneself as to "another"). In view of this the passage may be understood to mean

that man acquires a new, second plane of life activity precisely because he possesses *consciousness and will,* which the animal does not possess.

But this is just the opposite of the case. Consciousness and will appear in man only because he already possesses a special plane of life activity that is absent in the animal world – activity directed towards the mastering of forms of life activity that are specifically social, purely social in origin and essence, and, therefore, not biologically encoded in him.

The animal that has just been born is confronted with the external world. The forms of its life activity are inborn along with the morphology of its body and it does not have to perform any special activity in order to "master" them. It needs only to *exercise* the forms of behaviour encoded in it. Development consists only in the development of instincts, congenital reactions to things and situations. The environment *merely corrects* this development.

Man is quite a different matter. The child that has just been born is confronted – outside itself – not only by the external world, but also by a very complex system of culture, which requires of him "modes of behaviour" for which there is genetically (morphologically) "no code" in his body. Here it is not a matter of *adjusting ready-made patterns of behaviour,* but of *assimilating* modes of life activity that do not *bear any relationship at all* to the biologically necessary forms of the reactions of his organism to things and situations.

This applies even to the "behavioural acts" directly connected with the satisfaction of biologically inborn needs: the need for food is biologically encoded in man, but the need to eat it with the help of a plate, knife, fork and spoon, sitting on a chair, at a table, etc., etc., is no more congenital in him than the syntactical forms of the language in which he learns to speak. In relation to the morphology of the human body these are as purely and externally *conventional* as the rules of chess.

These are pure forms of the external (existing outside the individual body) world, forms of the organisation of this world, which he has yet to convert into the forms of his individual life activity, into the patterns and modes of his activity, in order to become an adult.

And it is this world of the forms of social human life activity that confronts the newborn child (to be more exact, the biological organism of the species homo sapiens) as the objectivity to which he is compelled to *adapt* all his "behaviour", all the functions of his organic body, as the object towards assimilation of which his elders guide all his activity.

The existence of this specifically human object – the world of things created by man for man, and, therefore, things whose forms *are reified forms of human activity* (labour), and certainly not the forms naturally inherent in them – is the condition for the existence *of consciousness and will*. And certainly not the reverse, it is not consciousness and will that are the condition and prerequisite for the existence of this unique object, let alone its "cause".

The consciousness and will that arise in the mind of the human individual are the direct consequence of the fact that what he is confronted by as the object of his life activity is not nature as such, but nature that has been transformed by the labour of previous generations, shaped by human labour, nature in the forms of human life activity.

Consciousness and will become necessary forms of mental activity only where the individual is compelled to control his own organic body in answer not to the organic (natural) demands of this body but to demands presented from outside,

by the "rules" accepted in the society in which he was born. It is only in these conditions that the individual is compelled to distinguish *himself from his own organic body*. These rules are not passed on to him by birth, through his genes, but are imposed upon him from outside, dictated by culture, and not by nature.

It is only here that there appears the *relationship to oneself* as to a *single representative of "another",* a relationship unknown to the animals. The human individual is obliged to subordinate his own actions to certain "rules" and "patterns" which he has to assimilate as *a special object* in order to make them rules and patterns of the life activity of his own body.

At first they confront him *as an external object,* as the forms and relationships of things created and recreated by human labour. It is by mastering the objects of nature in the forms created and recreated by human labour that the individual becomes for the first time a man, becomes a representative of the "human race", whereas before this he was merely a representative of a biological species.

The existence of this purely social legacy of forms of life activity, that is to say, a legacy of forms that are in no way transmitted through the genes, through the morphology of the organic body, but only through education, only through assimilation of the available culture, only through a process in the course of which the individual's organic body changes into a representative of the **race** (i.e., the whole specific aggregate of people connected by the ties of social relationships) – it is only the existence of this specific relationship that brings about consciousness and will as specifically human forms of mental activity.

Consciousness only arises where the individual is compelled to *look at himself as if from the side* – as if with the eyes of *another person,* the eyes *of all other people* – only where he is compelled to correlate his individual actions with the actions of another person, that is to say, only within the framework of collectively performed life activity. Strictly speaking, it is only here that there is any need for **will**, in the sense of the ability to forcibly subordinate one's own inclinations and urges to a certain law, a certain demand dictated not by the individual organics of one's own body, but by the organisation of the "collective body", the collective, that has formed around a certain common task.

It is here and only here that there arises the **ideal** plane of life activity unknown to the animal. Consciousness and will are not the "cause" of the manifestation of this new plane of relationships between the individual and the external world, but only the *mental forms of its expression,* in other words, its *effect*. And, moreover, not an accidental but a necessary form of its manifestation, its expression, its realisation.

We shall go no further in examining consciousness and will (and their relationship to "ideality") because here we begin to enter the special field of psychology. But the problem of "ideality" in its general form is equally significant for psychology, linguistics, and any socio-historical discipline, and naturally goes beyond the bounds of psychology as such and must be regarded independently of purely psychological (or purely politico-economic) details.

Psychology must necessarily proceed from the fact that between the individual consciousness and objective reality there exists the "mediating link" of the historically formed culture, which acts as the prerequisite and condition of individual mental activity. This comprises the economic and legal forms of human relationships, the forms of everyday life and forms of language, and so on. For the individual's mental activity (consciousness and will of the individual)

this culture appears immediately as a "system of meanings", which have been "reified" and confront him quite objectively as "non-psychological", extra-psychological reality. [This question is examined in greater detail in A. N. Leontyev's article "Activity and Consciousness" included in this volume.]

Hence interpretation of the problem of "ideality" in its purely psychological aspect does not bring us much nearer to a correct understanding of it because the secret of ideality is then sought not where it actually arises: not in space, where the history of the real relationships between social man and nature is enacted, but in the human head, in the material relationships between nerve endings. And this is just as absurd an undertaking as the idea of discovering the form of value by chemical analysis of the gold or banknotes in which this form presents itself to the eye and sense of touch.

The riddle and solution to the problem of "idealism" is to be found in the peculiar features of mental activity of the subject, who cannot distinguish between *two fundamentally different and even opposed categories of phenomena* of which he is sensuously aware as existing outside his brain: the natural properties of things, on the one hand, and those of their properties which they owe not to nature but to the social human labour embodied in these things, on the other.

This is the point where such opposites as crudely naive materialism and no less crudely naive idealism directly merge. That is to say, where the material is directly identified with the ideal and vice versa, where all that exists outside the head, outside mental activity, is regarded as "material" and everything that is "in the head", "in the consciousness"; is described as "ideal".

Real, scientific materialism lies not in declaring everything that is outside the brain of the individual to be "primary", in describing this "primary" as "material", and declaring all that is "in the head" to be "secondary" and "ideal". Scientific materialism lies in the ability to distinguish the fundamental borderline in the composition of palpable, sensuously perceptible "things" and "phenomena", to see the difference and opposition between the "material" and the "ideal" *there* and not somewhere else.

The "ideal" plane of reality comprises only that which *is created by labour* both in man himself and in the part of nature in which he lives and acts, that which daily and hourly, ever since man has existed, is produced and reproduced by his own social human – and, therefore, purposeful – transforming activity.

So one cannot speak of the existence of an "ideal plane" in the animal (or in an uncivilised, purely biologically developed "human") without departing from the strictly established philosophical meaning of the term.

Man acquires the "ideal" plane of life activity only through mastering the historically developed forms of social activity, only together with the *social* plane of existence, only together with *culture*. "Ideality" is nothing but an aspect of culture, one of its dimensions, determining factors, properties. In relation to mental activity it is just as much an *objective* component as mountains and trees, the moon and the firmament, as the processes of metabolism in the individual's organic body. This is why people often confuse the "ideal" with the "material", taking the one for the other. This is why idealism is not the fruit of some misapprehension, but the legitimate and natural fruit of a world where things acquire human properties while people are reduced to the level of a material force, where things are endowed with "spirit", while human beings are utterly deprived of it. The objective reality of "ideal forms" is no mere invention

of the idealists, as it seems to the pseudo-materialists who recognise, on one side, the "external world" and on the other, only the "conscious brain" (or "consciousness as a property and function of the brain"). This pseudo-materialism, despite all its good intentions, has both feet firmly planted in the same mystical swamp of fetishism as its opponent – principled idealism. This is also fetishism, only not that of the bronze idol or the "Logos", but a fetishism of a nervous tissue, a fetishism of neurons, axons and DNA, which in fact possess as little of the "ideal" as any pebble lying on the road. Just as little as the "value" of the diamond that has not yet been discovered, no matter how huge and heavy it might be.

"Ideality" is, indeed, necessarily connected with consciousness and will, but not at all in the way that the old, pre-Marxist materialism describes this connection. It is not ideality that is an "aspect", or "form of manifestation" of the conscious-will sphere but, on the contrary, the conscious-will character of the human mentality is a form of manifestation, an "aspect" or mental manifestation of the *ideal* (i.e., socio-historically generated) *plane of relationships between man and nature.*

Ideality is a characteristic of *things,* not as they are determined by nature but as they are determined by *labour,* the transforming and form-creating activity of social man, his *purposeful,* sensuously objective activity.

The ideal form is the form of a thing created by social human labour. Or, conversely, the form of labour realised in the substance of nature, "embodied" in it, "alienated" in it, "realised" in it and, therefore, presenting itself to man the creator as *the form of a thing* or a relationship between things in which man, his labour, has placed them.

In the process of labour man, while remaining a natural being, transforms both external things and (in doing so) his own "natural" body, shapes natural matter (including the matter of his own nervous system and the brain, which is its centre), converting it into a "means" and "organ" of his purposeful life activity. This is why he looks upon "nature" (matter) from the very first as material in which his aims are "embodied", and as the "means" of their realisation. This is why he *sees* in nature primarily what is suitable for this role, what plays or may play the part of a means towards his ends, in other words, what he has already drawn into the process of his purposeful activity.

Thus at first he directs his gaze at the stars exclusively as a natural clock, calendar and compass, as *instruments* of his life activity. He observes their "natural" properties and regularities only insofar as they are properties and regularities of the material *in which his activity is being performed,* and with these "natural" features he must, therefore, reckon as a completely objective *component of his activity* which is in no way dependent on his will and consciousness.

But it is for this very reason that he takes the results of his transforming activity (the forms and relations of things given by himself) as the forms and relations of things as they are. This gives rise to fetishism of every kind and shade, one of the varieties of which was and still is *philosophical idealism,* the doctrine which regards the ideal forms of things (i.e., the forms of human activity embodied in things) as the eternal, primordial and "absolute" forms of the universe, and takes into account all the rest only insofar as this "all the rest", that is to say, all the actual diversity of the world has already been drawn into the process of labour, already been made the means, instrument and material of realisation of

purposeful activity, already been refracted through the grandiose prism of "ideal forms" (forms of human activity), is already presented *(represented*) in these forms, already shaped by them.

For this reason the "ideal" exists *only in man*. Outside man and beyond him there can be nothing "ideal". Man, however, is to be understood not as one individual with a brain, but as a real aggregate of real people collectively realising their specifically human life activity, as the "aggregate of all social relations" arising between people around one common task, around the process of the social production of their life. It is "inside" man *thus understood* that the ideal exists, because "inside" *man thus understood are all the things* that "mediate" the individuals that are socially producing their life: *words, books, statues, churches, community centres, television towers,* and (above all!) *the instruments of labour,* from the stone axe and the bone needle to the modern automated factory and the computer. It is in these "things" that the ideal exists as the "subjective", purposeful form-creating life activity of social man, embodied in the material of nature.

The ideal form is a form of a thing, but a form that is outside the thing, and is to be found in man as a form of his dynamic life activity, *as goals and needs*. Or conversely, it is a form of man's life activity, but outside man, in the form of the thing he creates. "Ideality" as such exists only in the constant succession and replacement of these two forms of its "external embodiment" and does not coincide with either of them taken separately. It exists only through the unceasing process of the transformation of the form *of activity – into the form of a thing and back – the form of a thing into the form of activity* (of social man, of course).

Try to identify the "ideal" with any one of these two forms of its immediate existence – and it no longer exists. All you have left is the "substantial", entirely material body and its bodily functioning. The "form of activity" as such turns out to be bodily encoded in the nervous system, in intricate neuro-dynamic stereotypes and "cerebral mechanisms" by the pattern of the external action of the material human organism, of the individual's body. And you will discover nothing "ideal" in that body. The form of the thing created by man, taken out of the process of social life activity, out of the process of man-nature metabolism, also turns out to be simply the material form of the thing, the physical shape of an external body and nothing more. *A word,* taken out of the organism of human intercourse, turns out to be nothing more than an acoustic or optical phenomenon. "In itself" it is no more "ideal" than the human brain.

And only in the reciprocating movement of the two opposing "metamorphoses" – forms of activity and forms of things in their dialectically contradictory mutual transformations – **does the ideal exist**.

Therefore, it was only **dialectical** materialism that was able to solve the problem of the ideality of things.