

PREDICTION AND LAW IN HISTORY

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By

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished professors and guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be called upon to address you on this august and most important occasion for scholars and on an extremely important topic.

This occasion affords me the opportunity of setting down ideas on certain important controversies the resolution of which will help build a bridge between historians and other social <sup>scientists.</sup> ~~sciences.~~ Your invitation of me is at least an expression of awareness of the need for and the possibility of such a bridge.

August Comte, one of the founders of modern social science, is said to have characterised the role of science in human affairs in the following terms: Savoir pour prevoir, prevoir pour prevenir. This can be interpreted as <sup>if</sup> understand in order to foresee, foresee in order to anticipate. The role of science cannot be better or more briefly described.

On the African continent where rapid development rationally induced is a vital necessity, where the facts about the past either do not exist or have been greatly distorted, where nearly all social formations up to now from primitive communalism to colonial monopoly capitalism weigh upon the future, the need for a powerful social science needs no emphasis whatsoever.

Since all social facts are historically formed, history is the basic

social science. History, however, cannot be any great help to other social sciences unless it is itself a science. Neither can other social sciences aid historical study or be of much help to the development of historical scholarship unless they are themselves historically oriented.

The more students of society outside Marxist circles have turned to what Marxists have done all the time, that is, to the study of society as a dynamic or developing reality, the more they have come to see what Marxists took for granted long ago, that a multidimensional approach is the most fruitful. A genuine multidimensional approach, however, cannot lie anywhere outside the historical materialist approach with its historical and dialectical methods.

Meanwhile, in history the eclectic tradition still holds sway outside Marxian circles. Even though the leading historical materialist thesis, namely, that the material or economic conditions powerfully shape social structures and processes has been accepted in the form here formulated by very many historians and social scientists, among even those who accept it, it is usually treated as a truism that requires no special attention to its implications. What is worse, this acceptance is not associated with any disciplined dialectical method, even though it is also usually acknowledged nowadays that historical development is dialectical *in nature.*

In fact, the admission of the validity of historical materialism itself is done with one's tongue in one's cheek. The prevalent attitude is much like that of a liar, *fraud* ~~proud~~ or pretender who is compelled by his own self-entanglement to accept a truth that can no longer be hidden.

The only methods that can lead to a genuine marriage between history and other social sciences and to fruitful cross fertilization are treated to a mass of distortion<sup>s</sup> and tendencious accusations.

Meanwhile eclecticism reigns in history whilst a tendency to ignore historical reality reigns in the other social sciences.

In history, the electyics claim that all other approaches are deterministic, mono-causational, one-directional, etc. and invalid. These accusations are certainly not true of historical materialism, as can be shown in detail, but that is by the way. Some eclectics claim they adopt this position for want of any better approach. Some claim to adopt it because historical events, in principle, cannot be repeated. This is only <sup>one</sup> version of the general position that these events are unique and are thus <sup>un</sup>predictable. Some claim that man is a learning animal and, since he can alter his action by knowing what will happen if a situation persists, events are unpredictable, since all prediction presupposes the stability of a set of variables.

Connected with the alleged <sup>un-</sup>predictability of events is the allegation that no laws are discoverable in history. Sometimes we are told that man is endowed with freewill and, therefore, that his actions are, in principle, <sup>un-</sup>predictable. Yet those who make this allegation expect their wives not to take it kindly, to say the least, if they walk in with a charming, uninvited girl friend.

Tied up with the whole question of the predictability or law-governed character of historical events is the question whether historical investigation can be made a science. I shall try here briefly to answer the interrelated question of science, predictability and law in history.

#### History as Science

Whether history can be made a science or not depends on what science is understood to be. With the development of many sciences, natural and social, in recent years, a clearer conception of science itself has emerged.

The natural scientists of Nigeria recently formed an association which they named the Science Association rather than the Natural Science Association of Nigeria. This reflects a lingering misunderstanding of the nature of science.

Science is not limited to the study of forms of energy in nature, the principles of combination of natural substances or forms of plant and animal life. In fact, what is science and what is not is not decided by the object of study. Science resides in the method of approach to truth ~~or~~ to the making of statements accepted as true.

Empirical science rests on systematic factual investigation. Its method of approach to truth is to follow through a <sup>h</sup>punch in a certain systematic way. Facts are gathered which enable the <sup>h</sup>punch to be stated as a definite hypothesis. Further facts are then assembled and analysed with acceptable methods to test the tenability of the hypothesis. The hypothesis will be accepted tentatively as representing the truth only if the facts appear to lead convincingly to this conclusion. Observations which ~~there~~ are contrary to any hypothesis weaken it.

The scientific approach to truth includes the construction of theories as guides to research, the development of dependable methods, the public exposure of results and open criticism. It excludes 'truth' based simply on revelation, casual observation, mystery or <sup>mere</sup> authority.

One may assemble facts about the past and select the facts with a view to the creation of pathos <sup>or sympathy</sup> for a group. That kind of activity is art. It is like getting a piece of wood and treating it in such a way as to strike terror which is what the Ikot Ekpene 'ekpo' mask carver attempts <sup>with much success</sup> with his art. However, if facts are assembled and analysed with a view to ~~build up~~ <sup>building up</sup>

<sup>causal</sup>  
 causal explanation and if the study is objective, accurate, precise and guided by a theory that can be accepted or rejected, then such activity is scientific.

An illustration may clinch the point. Kenneth Dike, from factual study, suspected that the inability of European merchant adventurers to penetrate to the hinterland of West Africa through the coast was not due, as was then supposed, to a most inhospitable climate and the deadly mosquito. The effective cause, he suspected, was the opposition of the coastal merchant princes. He set up his <sup>h</sup>unch as a hypothesis and gathered data to test it. The <sup>h</sup> data, in this case, convincingly confirmed his hypothesis. He published it and historians who were competent to judge accepted his hypothesis as confirmed. His research was a scientific exercise. A hypothesis may concern whether an event did or did not occur, whether it occurs in one set of circumstances rather than another, whether a principle or process operates or does not operate, whether an act will lead to one result rather than another, whether one method leads to a more systematic, powerful, or clearer handling of material than another, etc.

We define a science simply as the social practice, the activity, <sup>which</sup> aims at determining as precisely as possible the conditions under which things happen. The aim of the methodological sciences is to provide strategies and tactics for extending the area of reliable factual knowledge as much as possible.

There is a false notion that science is concerned <sup>exclusively</sup> with <sup>causal</sup> explanation, with testing of laws, with general explanation. These are the <sup>ultimate</sup> goals of scientific activity, but not all scientific activities are directly of this kind. Otherwise classification, for instance, would not be scientific

activity. <sup>Leontieff's</sup> ~~Leonhett's~~ input - output tablau<sup>e</sup> does not itself explain any phenomenon; it only provides a framework for intersectoral links to be studied in an economy. It is a great aid to scientific prediction in a socialist economy, but it does not itself predict anything.

A classification scheme, a tableau, a definitional effort, a case study, the construction of an observational tool, etc., though not directly a case of causal explanation, is interesting for science and is scientific activity, only if oriented on scientific theory and aids theoretical explanation.

It is for this reason that Clapham, although a massive economic historian, was not particularly helpful to economic science. His studies were not designed to test any economic theories in particular. He selected facts that suited his fancy. Clapham can be excused because non-Marxian economics in his day was not such that its theories could be historically tested.

What we have said so far is to make clear what science is from the point of view of its procedure which is decisive for identifying scientific activity.

#### Law and Uniqueness

Let us turn to the next set of questions. Are historical events unique and <sup>is</sup> ~~in~~ this uniqueness such that there can be no laws in history to interest scientifically minded persons?

Let us tackle the question of uniqueness. What worries believers in eclecticism most is their non-dialectical attitude, their inability to think in terms of the general and the specific. Taking a dialectical view, every event is a unity of aspects. In respect of certain aspects it falls into a class with some things; in respect of other aspects it falls into a class

with other things. A man is an animal when we consider the aspect of his distinction from non-living matter, a primate when we consider classes of animals, an object less than seven feet when we consider heights of objects, an earth dweller when we consider location in the cosmos.

The Olumo Rock at Abeokuta is a particular rock. Its occurrence is a unique event. Yet a geologist can place it as cambrian, pre-cambrian, etc. He can also place it as igneous, metamorphic, etc. Its material belongs to the class of crystalline substances. The Olumo rock, from this point of view, is not a unique event to a geologist.

The coup d'etat in Nigeria in 1966 was a unique event. Yet it has many parallels with other coups in Africa and other underdeveloped countries in our epoch. It even has many parallels with the situation in England that produced Cromwell's coup and the one that produced the coups d'etat of Napoleon Bournaparte and Louis Phillipe in France.

If we define feudalism in terms of formal laws and <sup>certain</sup> forms of institutions, it becomes unique to Britain, Western Europe and possibly Japan. If we define it as Madel and others do in terms of its social systemic essence, as a scheme of patron-client dependence based on rights to land, it applies to Asia and Africa. It is far better to define feudalism thus broadly and then see what is general to all the societies so defined. We can then nail down the specificities of each case of this general social form more accurately. The more we can see of what is general, the more we can see of the specific.

The categories of general and specific have dialectical interpenetration. They are opposed, since they are contrasts, but they presuppose each other. Knowledge of specifics leads to a better knowledge of what is really general, whereas a pursuit of generalisation leads to a better knowledge of the respects

in which the specifics are particular or individual, that is, unique. It is not the case at all that uniqueness excludes generality. In other words, if something belongs to a class it does not mean that it is not specific or even in some respects unique. To think otherwise derives from the non-dialectical habit of thought that is either naively commonsensical or **founded** on the formal logic that has dominated West European scholarship since the Middle Ages.

Let us turn to the question of law. A scientific law, in the first place, is a generalisation expressing a regularity. It is in actual fact a conditional and not an absolute statement. These two words, 'regularity' and 'conditional' are crucial for <sup>settling many</sup> ~~the~~ differences ~~and others~~ on the matter of <sup>scientific</sup> ~~economic~~ law.

A scientific law, when formalised, says that given X, Y can be expected to follow with some regularity. In other words, laws are of different degrees of strictness. Laws are of different degrees of probability. Any time we say, for instance, that a coup de'etat puts a population in a state of ~~expectation~~, we are stating a law to which, presumably, we attach a high degree of propability.

Laws also are formulated with different degrees of exactness. If we say that the coefficient of expansion of iron <sup>is  $\alpha$</sup>  / where ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> a definite number we are by implication stating a law, namely, that under normal conditions when we raise the temperature of pure iron bar by 1°C, it will lengthen by a definite amount. It is well known that social laws can usually not be stated with this exactitude, but even a law that can be stated only in broad qualitative terms is a law.



Let us refer again to Dike's thesis and link up the question of unique events and law. To begin with, the non-penetration of the coast by expatriate merchants appears like an event. Actually, it was a class of events, since it was not one trading expedition that ~~failed~~<sup>failed</sup>, but several in various situations in various places, spread over many years. What he achieved, therefore, was actually a generalisation.

We can generalise Dike's hypothesis for coastal trade in general and test it. It ~~would~~<sup>could</sup> be formulated thus. Given a merchant class of middlemen on any coast, their interest to a degree conditions the participation in hinterland trade by traders from beyond the seas. We can test this proposition with facts from the Hanseatic League, from the English East India trade with the <sup>u</sup>Mogal empire, with the trade of Venice, Genoa and Zanzibar, with the shutting of the Japanese ports in the nineteenth century and a host of other such facts.

We can include this coastal trade proposition in a more general proposition, namely, that in merchant city states, the state plays the role of guarantor of the interests of the merchant class against competitors. A host of facts from the Hellenistic empire, from Han China, from Tokugawa Japan, from the European Middle Ages, from tenth to nineteenth century West Africa, and from the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French and British empires from the 15th century to the 19th confirm this proposition.

This proposition, again, falls under a more general proposition, namely, that the principal class of property holders in any state based on property discrimination, uses the state to protect its economic status against encroachment at home and abroad. This is actually recognised as a law by many historians and social scientists. It is one of those laws of history

which we are told cannot exist. Yet this law is so general and so regular that it is, in fact, like the law of gravity. Whether or not Dike's work was a particular test of this law or whether his choice of hypothesis was accidental, he in fact confirmed this law in the most unexpected of places. For once, a universal historical law applies to Africa. However, in case anyone is still in doubt, all that one need do is to test the general law with regard to the slave trade, the government trade monopolies of Old Ghana or any major issue affecting the economic interest of the ruling classes in any of the African states or any state anywhere.

We may even go ahead. We may formulate a rider to the law, namely, that the greater the challenge the more fierce the resistance to encroachment. We may use certain departures from normal administration as indicators of fierce resistance. In this way there is even a quantitative aspect to the law, quantitative in the ordinal sense of greater or less. Both this very general law and the rider to it are, as we have hinted, confirmed by the history of every state so far known. Like all laws, it is, in fact, associated with the very nature of the state itself.

Historical laws are statements of regularity derived from factual but comparative study of events. The precision and certainty with which these laws can be formulated depends on the depth and breadth of study.

A law is simply what tends to happen from the very nature of the circumstances under consideration. As we make a statement such as that "politicians in contemporary underdeveloped countries tend to have little patience with liberal democracy," we are stating a law, whether we are aware of this or not. Rigorously formulated, the law is that given a country, A, defined according to certain criteria that define a 'contemporary underdeveloped country,' by and large the politicians in A - the leading ones at any rate - will be observed to manifest behaviour

defined according to certain criteria as 'short temper with 'liberal parliamentary democracy.'

We sometimes say that if such and such had been the facts it would have been impossible for X to occur, or that since such and such were the facts Y was only to be expected. All such statements imply the operation of laws.

One thing that must be remarked about the case of Dike's research which has served us as guinea pig is that historical explanation was found for a fact whose social or historical explanation was considered non-existent and which had to be explained by naturalistic causes. We are reminded of the basic <sup>investigative</sup> ~~finding~~ principle of historical materialism, namely, that social events or phenomena should be explained socially, that is, historically.

From this example we observe certain things about laws. Laws presuppose existence of the phenomena about which the regularities are formulated. Unless there are fishes, there is no question of any law of fish behaviour. Unless there is water vapour, there can be no law of the behaviour of water vapour as distinct from other gases. This statement may appear self-evident once it is made. The reason for making it is to lead to the proposition that contrary to metaphysical dogma, laws are respecters of time and place.

As logical or 'if...then' principles, laws are universal and timeless, like all conditional statements. For a conditional statement does not assert anything except an abstract contingency. However, a law stated with existential or empirical import, that is, as an empirical rule relating to actual occurrence, is a respecter of the occurrence.

No phenomenon, not even matter itself in its highest abstraction, exists

everywhere, for there are vacuums. At any rate, laws are stated about concrete instances of matter, about events, and events occur in time and place.

Since the universe has a history, all laws are true of or apply to only the epochs and places in which the reference phenomena occur. All laws are to that extent historical.

Laws relating to animal metabolism and behaviour come into existence with animals. Laws of man's interaction with nature and his social behaviour emerge with his society. All facts, natural or social, are events in time.

Therefore, there are laws that apply to all human societies, laws that apply to a number of social epochs in which the societies, though different in an epochal sense, share certain similar properties. There are laws that apply to a particular social formation only, for instance, capitalism. There are laws that apply even to specific stages only in the development of a specific social system, for instance, laws of capitalism in the period of neo-colonialism. There are laws that apply to phases of a stage, for instance, laws that apply to inflation or depression in monopoly capitalism. Economic historians like W.W. Rostow have been concerned with keeping track of such laws, and there is no reason why cultural or political historians should not.

Concerning conditions, it is important to note that a scientific law is a conditional statement. No law tells us what must be without attaching a condition. Conditions, when seen concretely rather than through the spectacles of formal logic, fall into a number of types. These are necessary and sufficient, crucial and auxiliary, preconditional and instrumental. The first two dichotomies have been recognised in the literature on the

philosophy of science. The last is our own addition.

The existence of water vapour in the atmosphere is necessary but not sufficient to produce rain. However, the presence of a rotten egg is <sup>sufficient</sup> necessary to produce the smell usually associated with it, but not <sup>necessary,</sup> sufficient, since such smell can also be produced by the gas  $H_2S$ . The crucial condition is that without which something cannot take place. An auxiliary condition is one that helps it, for instance, a catalyst. For instance, there must be some dissatisfaction in the armed forces for there to be a military coup d'etat, but a serious mistake by the government can facilitate its actual occurrence.

The distinction between what we call preconditional and instrumental conditions can best be seen from an example. At sea level and under normal pressure, water boils at  $100^{\circ}C$ . Invariably, it is the heating process that makes water boil. Thus boiling is causally linked with heating, but boiling at  $100^{\circ}C$  occurs only given certain preconditions, namely, normal pressure at sea level. It is like saying that social order requires some authority but that this authority will not transform into state power unless the society is divided into classes to begin with. It is with this observation that we come nearest to the nature of historical conditioning of events.

#### Prediction and the Predictable

Let us lead from our conditional statement, 'Given X, Y is to be expected.' This whole statement is a prediction and Y is the predicted event. But the statement also expresses a generalisation; it is also a law. Hence every law makes a prediction. <sup>Speaking of</sup> ~~In~~ the past, the prediction would be 'Given X, Y was to be expected.' The past form is useful for

research. However, we are more interested in using historical study as an aid to prediction about the future.

Some claim that prediction is impossible because nothing is determined in history, nothing is perfectly foreseeable, etc. -- the same claims for alleging that there are no laws.

Yet Marxists have been making predictions and those predictions have been fairly accurate and have had a good degree of confirmation. For instance, Marx predicted that capitalism would develop from a small-scale enterprise system to a large-scale enterprise system, that the capitalist system would become more and more international, that the workers' movement would develop with the development of capitalism, that the class struggle between workers and capitalists would not be extinguished under capitalism, that systems defined on common ownership would emerge from the contradictions of modern capitalism as an antithesis to capitalism, that these new systems would be state systems and not anarchist communities, that capitalism would continue to revolutionise productive forces so long as it lived, that in the new states to come a public sector would first emerge in areas of the economy with large-scale enterprises. Engels predicted that the new system would rather emerge out of an alliance of workers and peasants. Lenin predicted between 1905 and 1914 that unless there was a strong working class intervention in politics there would be a world war among the imperialist powers. He predicted that imperialist rivalries would bring more wars. He predicted that although the colonial peoples lay prostrate and appeared dumb there would be a powerful national liberation movement.

When the fascist movement started Trotsky and other Marxists read its character as a species of self-defensive monopoly capitalist aggression and predicted that it would convulse Europe in war, unless it was combatted early by revolutionary working class action. Even the fact that fascism was connected with the ambitions of monopoly capital was denied by non-Marxist scholars, <sup>but</sup> ~~though~~ research after World War II later confirmed this.

I myself predicted long before it happened the civil war in Nigeria, the fact that the civil war and military rule would change nothing fundamentally, the death of Patrice Lumumba as soon as he called in the United Nations, the collapse of the Nkruma regime so long as it remained a regime bolstered by his personality rather than the actual organised strength of revolutionary forces, the assassination of Murtala Mohammed unless certain radical measures were taken in the armed forces, the collapse of the secessionist regime in Eastern Nigeria. I predicted in a 1965 study the crisis that has now erupted in India, and so forth.

These are examples of prediction about the future. Let us build up a connection with the past. If Lenin predicted a massive national liberation movement, this prediction entailed the coming into existence of revolutionary or anti-colonial political parties and movements. It entailed the rise in several countries of a certain kind of leadership. It entailed the formation of certain kinds of ideology. Eventually it entailed the emergence of a certain kind of state out of the disintegration of colonialism. It entailed that all these things would emerge in various specificities through various processes which, though various, would have an essentially revolutionary character. It did not entail that a man called Nnamdi Azikiwe, Pandit Nehru or Kwame Nkruma would be born; it entailed that

that leaders of this kind would emerge out of the population of colonial countries.

In historical scholarship, having defined the basic social conditions, the ruling ~~material change~~ <sup>change-entailing material</sup> ~~entailing~~ process and the nature of the contradictory groups <sup>with their</sup> ~~interests~~, we could say <sup>within limits</sup> what could or could not be expected. This would be a guide to searching for fact and connection among past events.

Among all social scientists it is Marxists who really have a tool for historical prediction as distinct from mere historical explanation or analysis. This is why it is they alone that have produced systematic historical predictions that come anywhere near confirmation. The Marxist aids consist in the materialist orientation in history which Dike and Basil Davidson have used with striking effect for explanation, and the method of dialectics, which is the dynamic method par excellence.

This is not the place to expound these methods, to answer the misunderstandings of them or to show the sources of their efficacy. Suffice it to say that the materialist orientation, because of its role in the definition of the objective and subjective conditions of social action and the dialectical approach, because of its emphasis on process, its capacity to pierce through the superficial, and because it affords the ability to grapple with contradictions and assess their significance for stability and change, are by far the most potent methods available for evaluating the possible types and directions of change.

Unfortunately, the materialist approach to history, the historical materialist method associated with it and the dialectical method are unknown by many, are distorted by those imbued with ideological prejudice against their revolutionary origin and are distorted and vulgarised even by



many who accept them as valid. There are also those who nod acceptance of these approaches without being aware that their mastery as methods makes a difference. Suffice it <sup>to say</sup> ~~is~~ that accepting mathematics or <sup>formal</sup> logic as useful is not the same thing as investing time and effort in mastering mathematics and <sup>formal</sup> logic. But let us proceed.

Let us have a closer look at the nature of prediction itself.

A prediction could take the form of definition of conditions and what may or may not be expected, given these conditions as constraints and certain processes as <sup>agents</sup> ~~aspects~~ of change.

Let us illustrate this. In his comments on authority, Frederick Engels takes certain autonomists or anarchists to task who, in their hatred of class society, imagine there <sup>can</sup> ~~would~~ be and call for a popular system without authority. Engels defines authority in general and shows that modern industry necessarily implies authority of one kind or other. Given modern industry and the division of labour necessarily associated with it, what workers can achieve is authority of a new kind. There will never be, <sup>he</sup> predicts, a popular society without some authority if it is expected to last a single day.

This <sup>is</sup> a prediction, that given division of labour a society without authority can never and will never come to be, and, given modern industrial division of labour, the process of popular revolution can produce an authority of a kind different from bourgeois authority but never a society without authority.

If this is determinism, then it is determinism with overwhelming evidence behind it. Given certain historical conditions and a certain process, a certain prediction, such as this one can be made with a dead certainty.

Again Marx and Engels declare that the industrial bourgeoisie as a class cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the forces of production. This is a prediction that given the ascendancy of the industrial bourgeoisie, perpetual absence of destabilising industrial inventions such as Keynes postulated is an impossibility. By the way, the experience after World War II, proved wrong the 1936-46 expectation of Keynes and proved right the 1848 prediction of Marx and Engels.

Prediction may be of various degrees of precision. When we say that at sea level and under normal pressure, water will boil at 100°C, we are being very precise. The same prediction could have been made by saying that given those conditions water is bound to boil at a temperature somewhere between 50°C and 200°C, or even at some temperature above zero. These are less precise predictions, but they are predictions. Though vague, they could still be confirmed or rejected by appropriate data.

Marx says in his preface to 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:'

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."

This passage makes a prediction that in a period of social revolution, there will be transformation, more or less rapid judged on an epochal historical scale, of the property base of society and the state and legal institutions sustaining them. We saw this happen during the English, French, Bolshevik and all modern revolutions. The prediction postulates a quickening of tempo in post-revolutionary political institutional change,

but it does not say how much more rapid it will be than adaptive or non-revolutionary changes in such institutions. It is vague but we can observe pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary changes in political and legal institutions and see if it is true or not. This particular prediction has been confirmed by all the events<sup>that</sup> have happened since it was made more than 100 years ago.

At one time it was thought that only a so-called deterministic prediction was prediction. Nowadays, thanks to the rise of statistics as a discipline, non-dialecticians are now aware that probabilistic predictions are also predictions, and they are by no means useless either as guides to research or as guides to action.

Finally, prediction is not a statement of expectation that necessarily excludes alternative possibilities. In considering the feed-back role of the state on the economic process, or, in more general terms the reciprocal action of the social superstructure of political and legal institutions on the economic base, Engels writes in his letter to C. Schmidt in 1890: "The reaction of the state power upon economic development can be of three kinds: it can run in the same direction, and then development is more rapid; it can oppose the line of development, in which case nowadays, it will go to pieces in the long run in every great people; or it can prevent the economic development from proceeding along certain lines and prescribe other lines."

Here alternative possibilities are postulated by the prediction. What is certain is that because of the natures of class society and the state, there will always be an interaction between the state and the economic process. In other words, absolute laissez-faire as advocated

by certain liberals, meaning that the state can exist in isolation from economic development, standing as a force above it <sup>independent of it,</sup> and indifferent to it, is impossible. This prediction not only lists the possible lines of intervention to be expected but what the consequence of each choice is bound to be whether anyone likes it or not.

This particular prediction has been confirmed by the collapse of laissez-faire experiments since 1870 and by the history of every state. The first is confirmed by the experience of Britain, Japan, the United States, etc. during the rise of their bourgeois systems, by the socialist revolutions and by the national liberation revolutions in varying degrees. The most spectacular confirmation of the second prediction is the history of Ethiopia and the Portuguese state and empire in the last few years. The most interesting confirmations of the last prediction in recent years are Ghana, Chile, Indonesia and Egypt where the use of the state in the struggle between the socialist road of development and the capitalist road finds spectacular illustration.

It is not true, then, that accurate predictions cannot be made in history. What is true is that no prediction of any kind is possible unless one possesses a science that is prediction oriented and whose methods enhance the ability for prevision.

Karl Popper in his well-read work, 'The Open Society and Its Enemies', argued that a discipline is not a science if it cannot make testable hypotheses. He alleged that Marxists with their historical method cannot make testable predictions, even though he grants that the Marxist approach is, indeed, objective. Popper's testability criterion for the determination of <sup>what is)</sup> science ~~and~~ or non-science is debatable; many eminent scientists do not

accept it, for there are other valid criteria for the acceptability of hypotheses within science.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, even were we to accept Popper's *testability* ~~acceptability~~ criterion, his contention that the predictions of historical materialism are untestable is false. If Popper <sup>himself</sup> is not able to point out what kind of evidence can be used to test this or that prediction of Marxists, that is a different matter. Even the broadest historical materialist hypothesis, namely, that the pattern of social institutions will be found to correspond in general to <sup>the</sup> character of the material base is testable. If this proposition were not broadly true, we would find capitalist institutions such as the Joint Stock Company or laws on the trade cycle among primitive hunters.

As we have seen, we also need clarity on what a prediction is supposed or not supposed to be, for that clarity decides what kind of evidence we can look <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ judging its truth content.

#### Conclusion

Eclecticism cannot lead to prediction and we vitally need prediction. It is not true that history cannot be made a science, that since historical events are in a sense unique, no law or generalisation is possible in history, for uniqueness is not limited to historical events. We have seen that law itself has been much misunderstood. It is <sup>not</sup> ~~no longer~~ valid, for instance, to regard the law of <sup>gravity</sup> ~~value~~ as the only possible kind of law. Laws vary in scope, *generality* and strictness.

It is not true that there cannot be valid predictions in history.

I have tried in this address to do my own thinking. What I have offered here are my own conclusions arrived at through years of acquaintance with

history, with the other social sciences, with science in general, with the methodology and philosophy of science, with various schools of social scientific methodology, and with the controversies that go on in these disciplines.

I hope that the new society will give us men who will be good scholars in the way of learning a lot from others but who will also be good philosophers in the way of doing their own thinking. As matters stand, I dare say that the body of scholars from which Africans stand <sup>most</sup> to learn if we want a really potent social science or predictive capacity is the Marxists.

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