cess guided by laws, which are not only independent of the will, the consciousness, and the aims of man, but, on the contrary, determine his will, his consciousness and his purposes[59]. The preface to the first edition of Capital reads as follows: "I conceive the development of the economic structure of society to be a natural process"[60]. This applies to a specific social order as well as to the economic basis of history as a whole: "When a society has discovered the natural laws which regulate its own movement... it can neither overleap the natural phases or evolution nor shuffle them out of the world by decrees"[61].

It is Marx's conception of history as the story of uniform social progress that determines the way in which Marx conceives of the structure of history and its sub-divisions. Differing viewpoints and principles yield various structural divisions and epochal sequences, the structure of history remaining always subject to the cardinal idea of mankind's development toward the harmony of a classless society.

The schematic sketch on page 20 may serve as a visual aid in understanding Marx's construction of history. His thesis of the increase of productivity and the resulting economic and technological progress is of special significance constituting a precondition for the development from "prehistory" to human "history". The beginning and end of this process suggest the marginal notions of absolute statics and absolute dynamics. Above this ultimate "materialistic" basis rises the more complicated and contradictory structure of the specifically socio-economic, political, and ideological configurations. In three dialectical stages human society evolves from (1) primitive, classless society via (2) class-civilization towards (3) civilized classless society. The epoch of class-civilization is again subdivided into the four periods of Asiatic, Classical, Feudal, and Capitalist Society. These cultures have quite different functions with regard to the possible attainment of the classless society of tomorrow.

In this scheme the key position, the jumping-off-place, is, of course, occupied by bourgeois society. Its system of production becomes ever more "socialized": The most decisive cleavage at any time in history opens between capitalism and socialism. When time has "fulfilled" itself and when the "Logos" embraces the "Kairos", the proletariat "grasps the opportunity" in completing the social revolution by the establishment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", thus inaugurating the transition to socialist classless society.

The process of liberation from nature's fetters, according to Marx, was accompanied by the ever growing enslavement of man by society resulting in complete alienation and dehumanization, a state character-

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59) Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.I, p.871.
60) Ibid.
61) Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.I, p.864.