

§13. We now turn to the second part of our inquiry. Our primary concern here is the pure theory of economic history, but as occasion offers, we shall indicate ~~in~~ some functional laws of the system of production for exchange. Our immediate task is the enumeration of the properties of that system.

§14. In the first place, production, economic activity as activity, is a routine. Man's need of material means for his well-being is either constant or recurring. On the other hand, the means themselves are either consumed at once or wearing away or being antiquated.

§15. In the second place, production is an inert routine.

Econ Phil, I, §5.

§5. Types of Economic Law.

Economic laws are of three types, antecedent, functional, technical.

By antecedent economic laws we mean those fundamental limitations of production that hold in any system and are simply instances of the principles of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle.

Thus in any system production is limited by the quantity and variety of natural resources, by the quantity of labour, the skill of craftsmen, the science of engineers, the stock of capital goods, and the degree of technological development attained.

Robinson Crusoe cannot build himself a marble palace. He cannot attend to his crops and construct his fort at the same time. The commissars cannot concentrate on the development of heavy industry and at the same time secure an abundant food supply and solve the housing problem.

By functional economic laws we mean the imperatives of the system.

Given a set of antecedent conditions, an end to be attained, and a system to attain it, there may be more than one way of attaining the end within the system under the conditions. But there certainly are many ways of not attaining the end. The functional economic law is the imperative that confines activity to such ways as attain the end. Further, since the system in its complete conception is a system by which the end is attained, and activities that defeat the end are not thought of as parts of the system but deformations of it. it