“Instead of taking a snapshot of society at a given moment (like the old
metaphysical method) and then studying it in order to distinguish the
different categories into which the individuals composing it must be
classified, the dialectical method sees history as a film unravelling its
successive scenes; the class must be looked for and distinguished in
the striking features of this movement. In using the first method we would be
the target of a thousand objections from pure statisticians and
demographers ... who would re-examine our divisions and remark that
there are not two classes, nor even three or four, but that there can be ten,
a hundred or even a thousand classes separated by successive gradations
and indefinable transition zones. With the second method, though, we
make use of quite different criteria in order to distinguish ... the class,
and in order to define its characteristics, its actions and its objectives,
which become concretised into obviously uniform features among a
multitude of changing facts; meanwhile the poor photographer of
statistics only records these as a cold series of lifeless data. Therefore, in
order to state that a class exists and acts at a given moment in history, it
will not be enough to know ... how many merchants there were in Paris
under Louis XIV, or the number of English landlords in the Eighteenth
Century, or the number of workers in the Belgian manufacturing industry
at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Instead, we will have to
submit an entire historical period to our logical investigations; we will
have to make out a social, and therefore political, movement which
searches for its way through the ups and downs, the errors and successes,
all the while obviously adhering to the set of interests of a strata of
people who have been placed in a particular situation by the mode of
production and by its developments.”

“...persons with the same fundamental conceptions unite for the
discussion of practical steps and seek clarification through discussions
and propagandise their conclusions, such groups might be called parties,
but they would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of
today.”