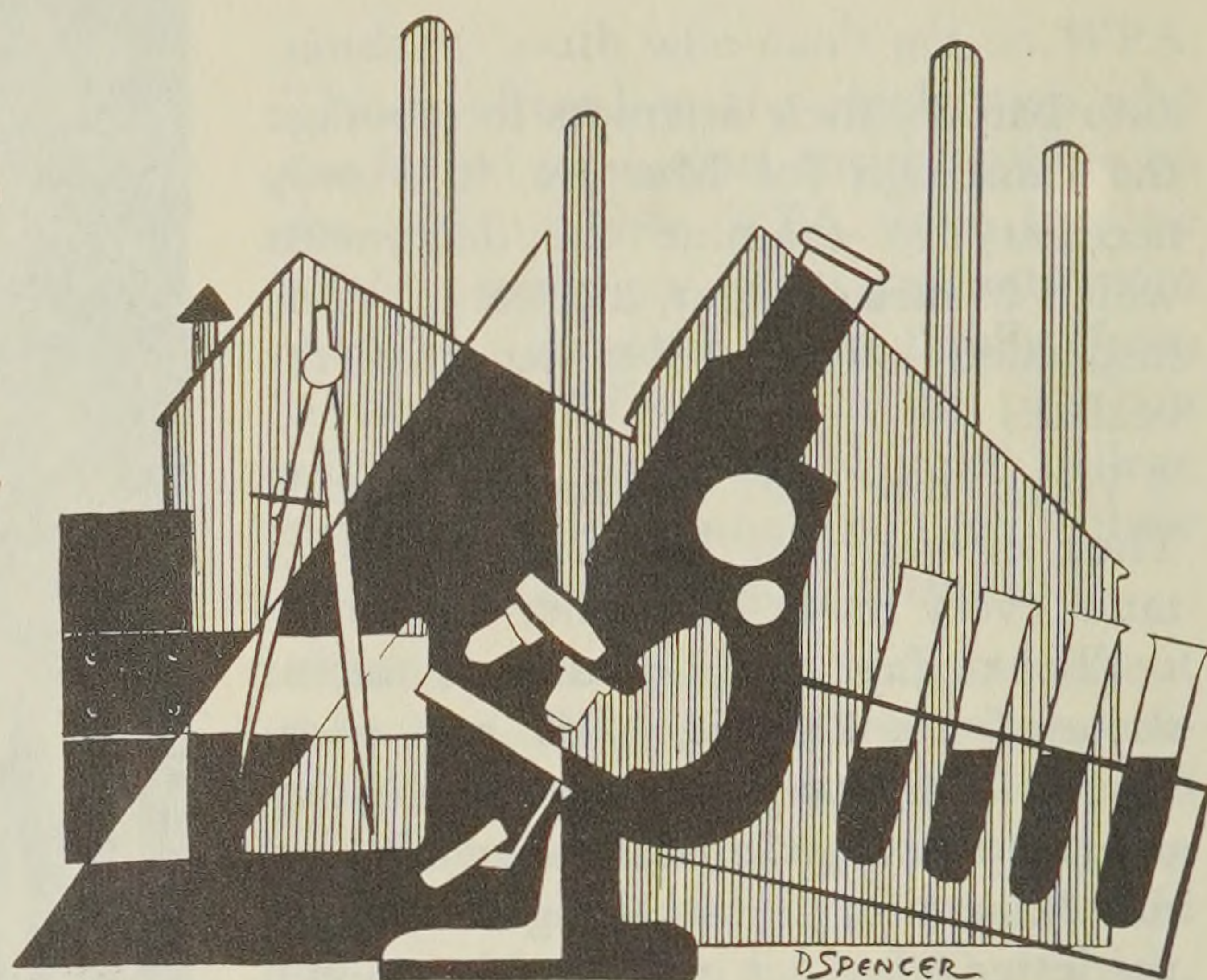


Science and Marxism

Truth Is Partisan and Sides Today With the Revolutionary Working Class

by Francis Franklin



RISING capitalism is especially interested in studying what has been loosely called the “physical universe,” the inanimate world. It needed physics, chemistry, astronomy and geology in order to carry on mining, manufacturing and navigation. It began to develop biology in the interest of agriculture and medicine. Psychology promised to be of some service in advertising and in introducing the rationalization of labor.

Capitalism, however, has never had any burning interest in social science. In fact, it has always been somewhat afraid of the study of human society. First of all, the study of social science does not so directly aid in the amassing of profit. Secondly, the industrial and financial barons have always been afraid that too much investigation of human society would, by uncovering the exact methods of capitalist exploitation, show how to change it.

SOCIOLOGY IGNORED

Social science was not altogether neglected by the early capitalists. As a result of explorations and trade, there occurred an immense accumulation of facts concerning the peoples of the most far flung regions. Such fact-gathering is necessary for the development of any science. In this way the capitalist penetration of the most distant lands prepared the way for a scientific sociology. Nevertheless, the mere accumulation of information by itself will never produce a science. In order to establish a study on a scientific basis, it is necessary to discover the relationships among facts, to discover the laws in accordance with which the movements relating them take place.

The early merchant capitalists made some beginnings in the study of the laws of human society. These merchants did find it to their advantage to know something of the laws of economics in order the more easily to accumulate wealth. Thus, in the 18th Century, Adam Smith wrote his *Wealth of Nations* as an analysis of the economic laws of mercantile capitalism, an aid to the British capitalists in the accumulation of wealth. In this work and in the economic theories of David Ricardo, mercantile capitalism laid the foundations for political economy. Adam Smith and David Ricardo were genuine social scientists, but capitalist political economy never advanced beyond the positions they achieved. Marx and Engels always spoke of these “classical political economists” of Great Britain with respect but all who followed are usually referred to by Marx as “vulgar economists.” And even within the writings of Smith and Ricardo, “vulgar economy” alternates with scientific or classical economy.

THEORY OF VALUE

The highest point reached by the political economy of Smith and Ricardo was in the development of the *labor theory of value*. Beyond this, capitalist economics could not go. The next genuinely scientific advance in the realm of economics was made by Marx and Engels, whose economics was rejected completely by the capitalist class, although eagerly embraced by the foremost representatives of the working class. When political economy advanced beyond the labor theory of value, it ceased to be capitalist science, became

working-class science. This was because, at this point, political economy began to reveal the laws of capitalist exploitation and thus indicated the way to the overthrow of capitalist rule.

There are those who ask how a science, which is supposed to discover truth, can find the truth and still be partisan, the science of a particular class. Can a theory be both true and partisan at the same time? The answer to this question can be given in the form of a very simple comparison. If one is in a dark woods and is robbed, who is it that wishes to discover the truth? Clearly the robber wishes to hide the truth in every possible way, in order to avoid detection, while the man who is robbed wishes to discover the exact and simple truth—no more and no less—in order that he may regain his property. Is it not clear that in this case truth itself gives aid to the one who has been robbed and harms the thief? In other words, truth itself is partisan. In the same way, those who exploit the people seek by every possible means to obscure the truth concerning their exploitation; while those who suffer from it seek to learn the simple truth, in order that they may know how to achieve their emancipation. That is why any genuinely scientific analysis of human society is rejected by exploiting classes and why it is therefore, the science of the oppressed and exploited.

Although capitalist economists developed the *labor theory of value* (namely that all exchange value is produced by the socially necessary time required to produce commodities), no capitalist economist could advance

beyond this. No capitalist scientist could give a correct answer to the question as to how *wages* are determined because the answer to that question reveals the secret of capitalist exploitation. The scientific answer to this question was given by Marx in the interests of the working class.

The Utopian socialists had also tried to base their theories on the labor theory of value. They said that if labor produces all value, the laborers "ought" to own all the products of their labor. They embraced this theory, as a scientific law and jumped off into the realm of *morals* and *Utopia*. If the law means the workers "ought" to own their products; then, since the workers do *not* own them, the law must not be true, must be only something which "ought" to be true. But science knows nothing whatsoever of "ought" or "should"; science knows only what *is*. Anyone may say that anything ought to be in accordance with any individual changing fancy. But facts are hard and stubborn things, and whoever wishes to change the world must study these *existing facts*, as they are, and cannot substitute for that hard task the study of mere wishes, or of what he thinks ought to be. Therefore, Marx heaped much ridicule on the Utopian socialists and directed the attention of socialists to the scientific analysis of stubborn existing conditions. Only by learning the laws of the actual society in which we live—and not the laws of something which merely "ought to be"—can we ever learn how to control and guide human society in the same way as physics and chemistry enable us, within limits, to guide and control inanimate nature. The scientist, like the good historian, must "neither weep nor laugh, but understand." Thus, Marx turned the socialists of his day away from the blind alley of moral exhortation and gave to socialism a firm scientific basis.

One may read the three huge volumes of *Capital* from beginning to end, and nowhere will he find a program or a description of socialist society. Instead he will find only the most painstaking analysis of the laws of the existing capitalist society in which we live. But by the time the reader has finished, even if he has never read the communist program itself, he will be able to see, the major outlines of that pro-

gram; because Marx shows clearly that capitalism is not a fixed and static entity, but an historical "moment" in the movement of human society, which has grown out of feudalism and many preceding social systems. Its own internal laws of motion, which contradict the possibility of its ever remaining for a moment as it is, are impelling it relentlessly toward its own decisive transformation into a totally new and socialist form of society. The Communist program, therefore, like the program of any engineer or manufacturer for constructing a dam or producing rayon, grows out of the study and analysis of existing conditions, and is not the product of any man's fancy.

He who devises in his mind a picture of a perfect society and then tries to force it on the world will never be more successful than was Don Quixote in his fight with the windmills. The windmills just would not become giants in spite of Don Quixote. Neither will the world ever follow the pattern of any man's mere dream. Man must first ascertain the true movements of the world, and then his knowledge of these actual movements will give him relative freedom to guide, but never to oppose them.

AGAINST UTOPIAS

Thus Marxism reveals that capitalism itself *forces* the working-class to move toward socialism. He who would help build socialism must recognize this objective fact and throw himself into the task of helping to organize and guide this *existing movement*. He will never accomplish anything if he attempts to ignore this reality and seeks to establish socialism through any other channel, such as, for example, by organizing intellectuals alone for the creation of a ready-made socialism to be handed the masses as a free gift on a legislative platter. History does not move that way. The intellectuals do not possess and will never possess such a legislative platter. Human society moves through class conflicts even as the mountains are formed through the stresses and strains to be found within the rocks.

Through his analysis of capitalist society in particular, Marx discovered the laws of historical movement in general, as set forth in the theories of historical

materialism and the class struggle. Sociology was at last put on a scientific basis, as a revolutionary weapon against capitalism, just as the "physical" science of rising capitalism had arisen as a revolutionary weapon against feudalism.

SOCIETY MADE SCIENTIFIC

All of modern natural science, therefore, is a product of struggle. The capitalist thinkers developed science up to a certain point beyond which they could not go. The great realm of human society remains for them largely outside the scope of scientific investigation. Thus it is impossible for them to achieve a thoroughly scientific world view. Superstitious doctrines concerning human society continue to flourish. Capitalism has tried to prevent scientific investigation of this realm but Marxist social science has been developed as a revolutionary form of struggle against capitalism. The development of Marxist social science has meant that the last remaining great realm of the world, kept largely outside the scope of scientific study, has now been subjected to such investigation. Marxist social science has consequently made it possible to achieve a thoroughly scientific world-view.

The working-class needs all the physical sciences produced by capitalism even more than the capitalists have needed them. Therefore, Marxism accepts all the physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology and psychology produced under capitalism—insofar as their theories are truly scientific and with the recognition that many of them are subject to constant revision. Not being believers in private property, Marxists claim this capitalist science as their own, while adding to it their own distinctive social science. It is this synthesis of the sciences which makes possible the world-view of Marxism.

There are essentially two methods of viewing the world as a whole, materialism and idealism, although there are many varieties of the two and many efforts to combine or reject both of them. Marxism takes the position that a scientific view of the world must base itself squarely upon a materialist philosophy and that idealism is the philosophy of all non-scientific viewpoints.