

## UNITING THE COGNITIVE AND THE SOCIAL: LAKATOS UNMASKED?

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The proposed comment to the paper by W. Lynch provides another indirect argument in favor of the thesis about Lakatos's hidden Marxist roots. The methodology of research programmes and the sociology of scientific knowledge (social epistemology) share a common object of criticism, and a constant opponent. Lakatos calls him the naïve falsificationist while a social epistemologist dubs him a metaphysical realist, or fact-objectivist. Both criticized the non-critical trust in scientific theories and facts as well as their reification though using different means: the internal dialectic of science's development and the socio-communicative interpretation of scientific knowledge. Still, the differences between them like the differences between Lakatos's and Feyerabend's approaches are two ways of expressing the similar position based on acceptance of some non-dogmatic Marxist ideas.

**Keywords:** Marxism, the methodology of scientific research programs, Lakatos, Hesse, externalism, internalism, sociology of scientific knowledge

## ОБЪЕДИНЯЯ КОГНИТИВНОЕ И СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ: РАЗОБЛАЧЕННЫЙ ЛАКАТОС?\*

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Предлагаемый комментарий к статье У. Линча дает еще один косвенный аргумент в пользу тезиса о скрытых марксистских корнях Лакатоса. Методологию исследовательских программ Лакатоса и социологию научного знания (социальную эпистемологию) объединяет общий объект критики и постоянный оппонент. Лакатос именует его «наивным фальсификационизмом», а социальный эпистемолог – метафизическим реалистом, или «факт-объективистом». Некритическая вера в научные теории и факты, их реификация подвергается критике как с точки зрения «внутренней диалектики развития науки», так и при социально-коммуникативной интерпретации научного знания. Различия между подходами Лакатоса и Фейерабенда оказываются двумя способами выражения одной и той же позиции, основанной на принятии некоторых идей недогматического марксизма.

**Ключевые слова:** марксизм, методология научно-исследовательских программ, Лакатос, Гессен, экстернализм, интернализм, социология научного знания

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The confrontation between the methodological and the sociological accounts of knowledge had essentially been reproducing the whole agenda of the science studies since the last third of the 20th century. The core question of this confrontation, the controversy of the cognitive and the social, keeps its topicality till now and inspires discussions between the proponents of foundationalism and relativism, realism and constructivism. The dead end of these discussions becomes more and more evident with the time but the resolution of the inherent oppositions goes hardly further the claim for their complementarity. The cognitive and the social, the logical and the historical are allegedly complementary to each other. The logic, methodology and philosophy of science, on the one hand, and the history and sociology of science and scientific knowledge, on the other hand, should merely follow the division of labor and peacefully collaborate with each other within the framework of STS [Mamchur, 2010]. But the social inherently includes the cognitive (as the ideal, possible schemes of activity and communication), and the cognitive (as different from the individual mental events) exists solely in a form of the social objectivizations – semiotic systems, tools, institutes, artifacts. This illusionary “division of labor” produces therefore no fruitful collaboration. Moreover, it turns into a kind of the cognitive disorder, an inescapable dualism. It appears as a framework, where the social settings become something virtual, unreal and the reality of knowledge and consciousness exists solely in the “monads without windows” – the individual human brains. Surprisingly the content of the brains reflects within the framework an independent reality and thus represents knowledge as transcending the individual.

The paper by William Lynch incorporates well in this context and adds new evidence for revisiting the abovementioned controversies. The main idea of the paper rests on a provocative historical discovery referring to the witnesses of the missing dissertation by Imre Lakatos written in Hungary before his emigration. Lynch argues that this dissertation reveals unexpected Marxist roots. This allows tracing and taking seriously some of Marxist epistemological ideas relevant for the contemporary discussions. There are ideas of a historical dialectics common for the social and natural sciences, and the idea of social ladenness of the scientific knowledge. Moreover, in contrast to the renowned presentations of Lakatos as a devoted “internalist”, Lynch discovers and endorses another Lakatos – an early proponent of the sociology of the scientific knowledge that bears some similar features with Boris Hessen’s externalism [Hessen, 1931]. Given my understanding of Lynch’s paper is correct, than the purpose of my comments will be to follow further the line of the argument and to draw some consequences for the tension between the history and the philosophy of science, and between the methodological and the sociological approach to the scientific knowledge.



Surprisingly enough, Lakatos had started his scholarly curriculum with the sociology of scientific knowledge. However, this looks not so odd if one recalls the value of the Neo-Marxist approaches for the Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the role of D. Lukacs for Hungary in particular. Donald Gillies, Lakatos' PhD student at Cambridge, testifies that in Lakatos' works there were clear signs of the influence of the philosophies, which he had studied in Hungary, namely Marxism and Hegelianism [Gillies, 2011]. There are also reports about the role played by Lakatos himself in the Marxist restructuring of the higher education in Hungary [Larvor, 2000]. It might seem unnatural for him to having accepted later the falsificationist platform for transforming the methodological analysis of science. But Lakatos seems to be disappointed enough with his personal practice in managing education in Hungary a lá Bukharin to undertake a shift from Marxism to Popperianism. Besides, taking into account the especially strong anti-communist attitude in the Anglo-Saxon world to those times, a freshman-immigrant could hardly escape joining the camp of the Cold War warriors. His further friendship with Feyerabend, another Popper's pupil, the fellow immigrant from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and the proponent of an unbounded cultural pluralism appears natural as well under the closer look. Feyerabend's provocative leftism that distracted from him the philosophy of science's establishment was in fact a logical extension of the critical rationalism applied in a reflexive manner upon itself. The devoted rationalist must be sensitive to criticism not merely declaring the significance of the "bold conjectures and refutations" for science but also performing self-criticism. Thus Lakatos developed in details the methodological analysis of knowledge to a degree, where it ceases to prescript norms and deals more with the description of the scientific practice. And here he revisits the concept of the "external history of science".

The historians of science proceed to a great extent from R. Merton's sociological ideas and H. Reichenbach's division of the contexts of discovery and justification. According to Merton, there should be clear demarcation between the scientific knowledge and the social institution of science that are the subject matter of the methodological and sociological analysis of science respectively. According to Reichenbach, the difference must be drawn between the behavior of the scientists, their activity in producing knowledge and the objectivization of the activity, its "product". The former belongs to the subject matter of the psychology of creativity while the latter – to the sphere of the logico-methodological analysis. The historians of science with the exception of Marxist school (B. Hessen, J. Bernal, J. Needham, E. Zilsel) focused mostly on the drawing the succession of the scientific ideas. But once they moved deeper in the history, they could not help addressing either unintentionally or occasionally to the biographical, cultural and social contexts of science (an example of A. Koyré is typi-



cal). The “refined fascificationism”, in Lakatos’s terminology, intends to replace the external norms imposed by a dominant ideology and social planning with the internal norms of scientific rationality. But Lakatos while elaborating the highly detailed rational norms and criteria for the progress/degeneration of research programs comes pretty close to a descriptive sociology of the scientific knowledge. Thereby the clear-cut boundary between the sociological (external) and the methodological (internal) resides into the framework of science itself, when earlier it demarcated the science and the non-science.

So the boundary between the internal and the external history of science, the methodological and sociological approach to scientific knowledge turns out to be relative and conventional. As Lakatos put it, “Neither can those who adopt the methodology of scientific research programmes explain a theory’s acceptance or its rejection without adducing further psychological hypotheses. Appraisal alone does not logically imply acceptance or rejection. But the adduced psychological auxiliary hypotheses will vary according to the normative theory of appraisal; and this is the rationale of my relativization of the internal/external distinction to methodology” [Lakatos, 1978, p. 190]. Let the normative theory of appraisal be a part of the Popperian “third world”; it means that it is neither psychological nor physical. Hence it is an element of scientific culture and sociality, which is also historical. The internal/external controversy is rooted in culture, and they turn into one another, when a researcher goes deeper into the detailed historical reconstruction. Realism and constructivism, the normative and the descriptive change their places as well.

And here it is worth recalling another Marx’s achievement – the criticism of the commodity fetishism. It is especially topical in terms of the current fascination with the appeal “Things strike back”, which reminds of Husserl’s “Zurück zu der Sache selbst” but in fact represents the so called ontological turn and in particular the Latourian metaphysics of things [Latour, 2000]. Latour, declaring an allegedly «fact-objectivism» tacitly propagates a naïve trust in the reality of the market economy, within which knowledge exists as a commodity though hides under the mask of the independent reality. The Marxist critical methodology allows understanding the objects of the modern science and technology as a particular type of the socially construed reality. Therefore they largely contain ideas, intentions, attitudes, plans and projects and represent to a higher degree the very social agent that Latour pretends to eliminate. Do then things really matter speaking of them independently of the mind and society? Is the underlining fact-objectivism sounder than a naïve faith in the reality outside knowledge and practice? Marx’s critique serves here as a demythologization of the illusions that appear due to the dogmatic reification of the scientific theories. The market economy turns every outcome of the human activity into a commodity product though the content



of many cultural artifacts cannot be assessed in terms of their market price. Like the ancient King Midas' touch transmuted everything into gold, so science transforms everything it deals with into its objects. This "objective illusion" of the modern world gives birth to the idea of ontology as the mind- and society independent picture of reality [Kasavin, 2015], which knowledge must correspond to. But this is no more than a requirement for the coherence between the previous scientific theories reached the level of reification and the frontline scientific knowledge. Thus the naïve or metaphysical realism serves as the counter-productive strategy blocking the growth of science.

In contrast to this, the recognition of the permanent dynamic connection of science and society allows understanding the ontologies as relative as the scientific theories. The fallibilist thesis and the dependence of knowledge upon the conceptual framework does not, unlike realism, lead to the dead end, because it contains an idea of a productive codependence of knowledge and sociality. Yet it is necessary to abandon the dogmatic Marxist ideas about communism as the end of the previous history and the negative treatment of an elementary social development. This is a minimum condition allowing an infinite development of scientific knowledge, technology, and the social relations. Lakatos's case shows that the meaning of his methodology of scientific research programmes is not limited to what he himself described as "refined falsificationism". His ideas provide additional arguments against metaphysical realism in favor of the integration of the social and cultural factors in the development of science. Lakatos's methodology proves compatibility with the methodology of Boris Hessen and the sociology of scientific knowledge. The similar non-orthodox Marxist theory of science had been partly implemented in Russian science studies at the end of the twentieth century [Kasavin, 1993]. Lynch's analysis reminds me of later Wittgenstein's hidden sympathy for Marxism and outlines a kind of "trading zone" (P. Galison) for the analytical and post-Marxist science studies.

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