

federal powers, and with neither sovereignty interfering with the powers of the other.

The reader will find "The Power to Govern" to be an interesting volume, even though, as already indicated, its contents might have been stripped of superfluous adjectives and its chapters purged of the extended quotations from the founding fathers without loss to its theme. In short, "The Power to Govern" is an article raised to the dignity of a book.

EDWARD C. KING

THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHY AND THE SCIENCES. J. B. S. HALDANE. Random House, \$2.00.

An eminent British scientist, J. B. S. Haldane, has recently published a book¹ extolling Marxism, which is a body of doctrine that has been assembled from the writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Lenin. It is not strictly codified, and, to some, includes material from writers other than the three persons named. Strange as it may seem, Engels, who was more versatile than Marx, is the source of much that is called Marxism.

One who knows something of Marx, and nothing of Marxism, might expect that the body of doctrine would have to do with economics—that it would pertain exclusively to the origin and development of capitalism and its emergence into socialism. But in fact, it is carried much beyond this by some of its adherents and is held to concern all realms of life and human experience. This book, as the title indicates, is an attempt to apply Marxism to the sciences—to quote the chapter headings: to Mathematics and Cosmology, Quantum Theory and Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, and Sociology.

The principles that Haldane would apply to these fields of science are: the principle of the unity of theory and practice, materialism, as defined by Marx and Engels, and "dialectical principles," namely, the principle of the unity of opposites, the passage of quantity into quality and conversely, and the negation of the negation. This last named principle, which may be taken as illustrative of Marxism, comes out of the dialectical process as formulated by Hegel and taken over by Marx, which conceives of knowledge and of historical evolution as proceeding through the three steps of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Thus, a fact is discovered, then its opposite, and out of this conflict, or negation, a wider truth is found, which negates the negation. Or, in medieval

¹ The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences.

English history, to cite an illustration from Haldane, workmen owned their own tools, then they were deprived of them by the development of large scale industry (their ownership was negated), and now as claimed by Marx this process is being negated, a higher synthesis is being formed.

Haldane applies this "principle" to mathematics by saying: "You discover a rule in mathematics. You next proceed to break the rule, and then modify your original definitions in such a way as to make the break legitimate." (p. 53). And in the discussion of biology he says, among many other references to this "principle," "The change by which a new heritable variation arises is called mutation. It is, if you like, the opposite of heredity; it negates it." (p. 120).

These quotations illustrate the absurd position that one can get into when he becomes a Marxist. It was no doubt an appreciation of this that led Marx to say at one time "I am not a Marxist." Haldane can hardly expect seriously that mathematicians will go about breaking rules and then out of the scraps make new rules in conformity with the Marxian dialectic. Advances in knowledge do come, often at least, by first proving that some accepted proposition is wrong. But why try to cut them all to fit the Procrustean bed of Marxism? Why, for example, call a mutation a negation of heredity? This doesn't make it so, even if it does please the Marxists. What is the significance of approaching problems in this way? How does it advance thought? How would medical research workers studying cancer, or army engineers trying to control a flood be helped by this abracadabra of negating a negation? But to the Marxists it is as potent as the mumbo jumbo of a medicine man is to the primitive natives. Any extension of knowledge that they can fit into the pattern of Marxism means an added star in the crown which they are constantly burnishing for their master. Also, of course, social evolution is a very real thing. Practices and institutions become out-moded and give way to new ones, but there are far better ways of describing these changes than the trinitarian terms of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

But despite absurdities, the quest for certainty and the desire for intellectual companionship and human comradeship exercise a strong pressure on many men to accept authority and doctrine. It is thus that the multitude of religious cults have arisen, and as well a host of other cults in the various other fields of human interest, health, politics, etc. Even lawyers are sometimes accused of being slaves to dogma, and economists have not been entirely free from the jibes of critics at their "laws" as laid down by their "prophets" and printed in their "sacred books."

But no contemporary group is so subject to this criticism as are the Marxists. The spectacle of able men devoting themselves to proving that Marx and Engels, sixty to ninety years ago, made statements that are in accord with the modern developments in quantum mechanics, cosmology, or biology is almost as ludicrous as the attempts, happily rare at this date, to prove that the writers of Genesis were as well informed as modern geographers and geologists in respect to the shape of the earth and its development. And the writers on economics who are under the spell of Marx are not less ridiculous. The laborious exegesis to prove the validity of the writings of the prophet, which were set down in the days when economic analysis was but little developed, seems almost as unbelievable as did the existence of the giraffe to the country bumpkin when he first beheld it.

In practice the Marxian dogma has many tragedies as part of its record. Russia has suffered from it, and in pre-Hitler Germany its nature is revealed by its having been an obstacle to what would now be called a "united front" against the growth of Nazism. H. G. Wells in his autobiography says: "Marxism is in no sense creative or curative. . . . It is an enfeebling mental experience of spite which mankind has encountered in its difficult and intricate struggle out of outworn social conditions toward a new social order." (p. 143). Max Lerner in his recent book, *It Is Later Than You Think*, trenchantly sets forth a half-dozen errors of Marxism, all having to do with economic development.

Social change comes, of course, in part out of closely formed, well disciplined groups. To make one's self effective it is often well to become a slavish follower. But social change is not necessarily social progress. Cults may rise to power and visit their sins upon many generations. To prevent the stultification of thought, the channels of knowledge should be kept open. Men should not chain themselves to other men's chariot wheels.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Haldane's enslavement will prove to be temporary, and that he will come to regard this book sadly as the ebullient product of a new-made convert. He says in the opening page, "I have only been a Marxist for about a year."

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