



Debating Bogdanov's Proletarian Science: An Introduction to the Commentaries

Siyaveş Azeri

The publication in *Marxism & Sciences* of Alexander Bogdanov's 1918 texts on science and the working class (Şenalp and Bogdanov 2026) was intended not simply to make historically significant documents available in English, but also to invite renewed discussion of the problems they raise. Questions concerning the social organization of scientific labour, the class character of knowledge, specialization and the division of intellectual labour, the unity of the sciences, and the relation between scientific knowledge and collective social practice have hardly lost their significance. If anything, transformations in contemporary scientific production have given many of these questions renewed urgency.

The commentaries published here should be understood in this spirit. Their purpose is neither to establish an authoritative interpretation of Bogdanov nor to measure contemporary positions against a presumed Marxist orthodoxy. Bogdanov's work occupies a particularly contested place in the history of Marxism and the philosophy of science, and the renewed interest in his writings has itself generated divergent assessments of the theoretical and political significance of his project. The value of returning to such a body of work lies partly in allowing these disagreements to become explicit.

Joost Kircz and Sascha Freyberg approach Bogdanov's theses from substantially different directions. Kircz situates the proposal for proletarian science within the broader philosophical and organizational ambitions of Bogdanov's work and critically examines its claims concerning monism, specialization and the possibility of a unified science. Freyberg, while questioning aspects of this criticism, reconstructs the 1918 theses as a contribution to the politics and social organization of knowledge, asking what Bogdanov's concerns with the separation of scientific knowledge from collective labour, the fragmentation of scientific activity

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- Correspondence: Siyaveş Azeri, Babeş-Bolyai University.
- e-mail: savesazeri@gmail.com
- ORCID: 0000-0002-3765-2489
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and the organization of experience might mean under contemporary conditions. Their disagreement consequently concerns not only particular propositions in Bogdanov but also the terms in which his project should be evaluated.

We regard such disagreement as part of the purpose of publishing historical materials in *Marxism & Sciences*. A historical text becomes intellectually productive when it can once again become an object of argument. Commentary, in this sense, is neither commemoration nor the application of ready-made contemporary judgments to the past. It is an attempt to reconstruct a problem closely enough that its unresolved dimensions can become visible again.

The two contributions therefore need not converge upon a common assessment of Bogdanov. Their differences instead open a broader field of questions: In what sense can science possess a class character? How should the social determination of scientific knowledge be understood? Does specialization represent fragmentation to be overcome, or a necessary differentiation of scientific activity? What could the unity of science mean? And what relation should obtain between scientific autonomy, collective control and the broader organization of social labour?

We hope to make the commentary format a space in which such disagreements can be developed without requiring their premature resolution. The aim is not to provide the last word on the texts published in the journal, but to enable them to acquire an intellectual afterlife through criticism, reconstruction and debate.

References

- Şenalp, Örsan, and Alexander Bogdanov. 2026 "The Translations of Bogdanov's 'Science and the Working Class.'" *Marxism & Sciences* 8: 253–278.

Biography

Siyaveş Azeri is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Azeri is also co-editor-in chief of *Marxism & Sciences* and an associate of the "Thesis Twelve: Mardin Value-Form Circle." He is the author of *The Riddle of Subjectivity: Contextualizing Hume's Theory of the Self* (Brill, forthcoming) and *Surplus-Knowledge: Essays on Epistemology and the Constitution of the Self* (Sibiu University Press, 2025). His Recent articles have appeared in *Critical Studies on Religion*, *Studies in East European Thought*, *Social Epistemology*, *Theory & Psychology*, and *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, among other journals.