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Author(s)	YAJIMA, Takeshi
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An Introduction to Land Economics.

by

Takeshi YAJIMA

This short thesis is written as an introduction to land economics which has begun recently to attract more and more attention of many economists. Indeed, many economists are endeavouring to establish land economics as a new science, independent from the theoretical social economics. Not long ago Prof. Matsuda commanded us to write a short thesis on the land economics, so taking advantage of this good opportunity I wish to write of my own consideration regarding this problem through my study.

To begin with, I wish to study briefly the scientific character of theoretical economics, in order to bring the character of land economics to light from the observation of relationships with the former.

I

We divide the world into two large fields i. e. nature and society. The science whose object (Gegenstand) is nature, is called natural science, and the other whose object concerning society, corresponds to social science. Natural science and social science have different methodology as well as different object from each other.

Now, let us consider to which field economics belong, which is the main object of this study. From ancient times there have been many different opinions and insistences regarding to the scientific character of economics and under the same name "economics" many heterogenous systems have been constructed. For example the opposition between Austrian school and historical school or between mathematical school and Marxian economics shows this remarkable character.

Then, whence did such a necessity which made such a wide gap between different systems of economic science come from? The reason is quite simple. That is, the economic science has the direct relations between nature and society as its fundamental object; and depending upon such a remarkable character, various phenomena which we call "economic" seem, at first blush, to have two different phases at the same time, i. e. natural scientific and social scientific.

Whenever they emphasize one of these phases or, distorting and mutilating these both characters, jabbed into same retort, they could characterize their own system from others.

For example, some think that there are two kinds of economic life ; the one having historical character and the other non-historical. G. Cassel says in his "Theoretische Sozialökonomie" as follows.

".....Gewisse wirtschaftliche Vorgänge sind von der Organisationsform des wirtschaftlichen Lebens vollständig bedingt, andere wieder sind in ihrem Kern von der jeweiligen Organisation der Wirtschaft unabhängig, wenn sie auch in ihrer äußeren Form von dieser beeinflusst werden. Es ist für die Wirtschaftswissenschaft von Bedeutung, solche Vorgänge, die für jede Wirtschaft wesentlich sind, als solche zu charakterisieren und auch sonst die etwa vorhandene relative Unabhängigkeit der wirtschaftlichen Erscheinungen von den wirtschaftlichen Organisationsformen hervorzuheben".⁽¹⁾

In short, according to his insistence, some kinds of economic phenomena are historical and "sind von der Organisationsform des wirtschaftlichen Lebens vollständig bedingt"; but, on the other hand, some non-historical, and in their essence they have no relation to the social organisation whatever.

According to my conception, historical character of economy means, that the economic life of humanbeing is executed, taking different forms according to different stages of the human social development, Inasmuch as there has not been such a thing as economic life which had no definite form, I can not conceive such an absurd thing. For example, (this example may be rather gross) labor took necessarily a definite form, as co-operation of members in a "Markgenossenschaft" or labor under the slave system or labor

(1) G. Cassel : Theoretische Sozialökonomie III Aufl. S. 7-8.

of wage system. So, such an extraordinary labor which did not take any special form through many different stages, has never appeared in our history and, indeed, such a thing is beyond imagination.

We use, of course, sometimes an idea such as "economic life in general" or "labor in general"; however, such is only an idea we get when we abstract from all different forms of economic life or labor life, in other words, it is only, so to speak, a product from our brain. Hence, this idea is conceived only as an abstract character which too has never existed in our history.

But we must not misconceive. By my contention above, I do not mean that such an abstract idea as "economic life in general" or "labor in general" is useless for construction of our systematic knowledge. I only want to emphasize that it is absurd to abstract the present economic life (which has a definite form) to such an extreme grade. Because by such an abstract idea it is impossible to comprehend the present economic life which has a definite form in reality.

In short, I wish to oppose such methods as to abstract all social forms into an abstract one as Austrian school does, or, to insist the co-existence of historical and non-historical characters in the present economic life as Cassel or his followers do.

In the postscript of the second edition of the Capital, Marx accepts, expressing entire agreement with a criticism given by a Russian journal for his methodology.

The criticism reads as follows.

".....aber, wird man sagen, die allgemeinen Gesetze des ökonomischen Lebens sind ein und dieselben; ganz gleich gültig, ob man sie auf Gegenwart oder Vergangenheit anwendet. Gerade das leugnet Marx. Nach ihm existieren solche abstrakte Gesetze nicht....."

Nach seiner Meinung besitzt im Gegenteil jede historische Periode ihre eigenen Gesetze..... Die alten Ökonomen verkanteten die Natur ökonomischer Gesetze, als sie dieselben mit den Gesetzen der Physik und Chemie vergleichen....."⁽²⁾

(2) K. Marx : Das Kapital Bd. I Nachwort zur zweiten Aufl. S. XLVII

And Marx says in another place as follows.

“Allein alle Epochen der Produktion haben gewisse Merkmale gemein, gemeinsame Bestimmungen. Die Produktion im allgemeinen ist eine Abstraktion, aber eine verständige Abstraktion, sofern sie wirklich das Gemeinsame hervorhebt, fixiert und uns daher die Wiederholung erspart.”⁽³⁾

Such is the very insistence which I want to emphasize here.

A natural matter, by the way, takes a special character called “economic” only in such a case that it represents the relation between persons in society. We cannot see any economic character in things which have no social character.

We now consider that economic phenomena are social phenomena, so we take economics as one of the social science. On the other hand, social science corresponds to those which has been called cultural science or historical science by some scholars, and its remarkable point is that of its intense historical character. So, the land economics must be defined as a social science, which, one of the most characteristic points is that it is historic.

II

The most fundamental fact about human-being is that we exist. No doubt, we cannot deny our existence at all, as it is so evident a fact. While we are existing, we need something to provide for our lives. In other words, for our existence we need energies which are in some conditions got in the outer world. These energies are supplied by various kinds of materials. As long as we lead human life, we can not keep our lives without various things for living such as foods, clothes, etc.

Therefore, the getting of materials for living is the fundamental fact for the keeping of life. However, as soon as the keeping of life becomes easy, under an organisation or system, the humanbeing is not only satisfied by the keeping of life, but they want to make their lives more full of meanings. This want is to be satisfied by various cultures.

Bukharin emphasizes the importance of this fundamental fact in other words in his famous “Historical Materialism”. It reads; “No system, including that of human society, can exist in empty space; it is surrounded by

(3) K. Marx : Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie Einleitung S. XV

an "environment", on which all its conditions ultimately depend. If human society is not adapted to its environment, it is not meant for this world; all its culture will inevitably pass away! Society itself will be reduced to dust..... The social relation between men which most clearly and directly expresses this relation to nature is the relation of work. Work is the process of contact between society and nature. By work, energy is transferred from nature to society: and it is on this energy this society lives and develops (if it develops at all). Labor is also an active adaptation to nature. In other words, the process of production is a fundamental living process of society"⁽⁴⁾

From this quotation we can learn how fundamental the production is. Then, what is production? and, in what form is it executed in society?

Concerning to this question Marx says.

"Alle produktion ist Aneignung der Natur von seiten des Individuums innerhalb und vermittelt einer bestimmten Gesellschaftsformen" and on the other hand it postulates "Sicherstellung des Eigentums".⁽⁵⁾

We may conceive therefore that the economical phenomena which appear directly regarding to nature, i. e. "land" in a wide sense, are fundamental in the economic society; hence it may be concluded, that the cleverest and the most proper way is to begin the economic study from such phenomena. It seems that land economics is the most fundamental science from which it commands all other economic sciences. But it is not so; by further study we can learn that this is far from the truth.

Marx says. "Zum Beispiel nichts scheint naturgemäßer, als mit der Grundrente zu beginnen, dem Grundeigentum, da es an die Erde, die Quelle aller Produktion und allen Daseins, gebunden ist, und an die erste Produktionsform in allen einigermaßen befestigten Gesellschaften die Agrikultur. Aber nichts wäre falscher."⁽⁶⁾

Why? Let us consider. In the society of commodity production, the members of society are isolated from each other, because of the system of division of labor and private property; so the social relationships among each economic subject are represented in the process of exchange of commodities, and as a consequence of this fact, the exchange process gets such an

(4) N. Bukharin : Historical Materialism pp. 89-90

(5) K. Marx : Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie Einleitung S. XVIII

(6) a. a. O. S. XLIII

extraordinary function that it makes the production process possible, as if it were a central organisation which commands all economic activities according to a certain plan. Therefore exchanges which are done among producers themselves, in other words, the relationships of exchange of the produce which are done by producers themselves, become objective "Dasein" for those who exchange. In short, the relationships through exchanges which they themselves make, result in ruling them reversely.

So, evidently it should be the object of the theoretical economics to find such rules which is able to command both production and exchange in the society of commodity production.

Obviously then, we must begin our study with the movement of Capital in order to comprehend the truth of the various economic phenomena in the present age.

III

In conclusion, I deny the existence of the theoretical land economics in the sense as being independent from the theoretical social economics. I believe that the land economics is a science which should be included in the theoretical economics as a part of the latter.

In this case I would like to define the theoretical science as the science which deals with the *finding of causalities in various phenomena*, taking it in the strict sence. At the same time I take such a prerequisite that the land economics is an economic science and ought not to be called by any other science.

I believe that the object of the study of social economics (or the theoretical economics) is the relationships of the capitalistic productions. In other words, it is the capital which is the ultimate operator of all such phenomena, i. e. "the value which produces surplus value." Also that the capital must not be taken as "a simple abstract thing." for, on the contrary, it must be the real movement in society. In such processes of its movement, there appear various economic phenomena concerning to land. As far as we take such phenomena and make them our chief object of the study, we may be able to discuss on land economics. In this science, rent, agricultural populations, possession of land, etc. are the main elements for the object of this study.