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8 From Science to Science

Anton Pannekoek, Willem Bonger, and Scientific Socialism

Annemarie Rullens

Abstract
Anton Pannekoek was a remarkable man. As a renowned astronomer and equally influential socialist theoretician he set his mark in many ways. As soon as socialism was labelled 'scientific' at the end of the nineteenth century, academics such as Pannekoek started exploring how and why socialism was scientific. In other words, what exactly was scientific socialism? How were science, ideology, and politics related? Pannekoek's particular ideas on scientific socialism were soon contested. His contemporary Willem Bonger can be seen as an interesting counterpart. This article explores Bonger's ideas on socialism as 'applied science', thereby placing Pannekoek's ideas in perspective and demonstrating that there were differing conceptions of the role of science in socialist politics and how, as a science, socialism needed to be practised.

Keywords: Anton Pannekoek, scientific socialism, Willem Bonger, technocracy, socialist politics

Introduction

In 1880, Friedrich Engels stated in his pamphlet *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* that socialism had become a scientific doctrine. As the ideas of Engels and Karl Marx were embraced by a significant part of the labour movement, they gained a sizable following by the end of the nineteenth century. Soon after, socialism came to be seen by many as a scientific theory that explained society's development through predetermined laws of social evolution. In the Netherlands, too, Marxist intellectuals adopted this worldview. Anton Pannekoek, for example, embraced this

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conception of scientific socialism to a large degree when he joined the labour movement in 1899.[1]

By defining their socialism as scientific, Marx and Engels made a distinction between their brand of socialism and other, more anarchist-influenced 'utopian', strands of socialism. Even so, it soon became clear that there were different opinions on what it meant for socialism to be scientific. This paper reconstructs the ideas of the Dutch socialist theoretician Willem Bonger on scientific socialism. Bonger envisioned socialism not so much as a reflective science for interpreting social developments, but rather as an applied science. He propagated a socialism that based itself on the newest scientific insights and developed policies in order to build a socialist society. Bonger's ideas thus focused not so much on interpreting and theorizing but on *making* a socialist society. In doing so, he set himself apart from other, more Marxist-inspired socialists like his contemporary Pannekoek. In many ways, Bonger can be seen as a counter example to Pannekoek. This is remarkable since both men had many things in common: both were influential scientists who put their mark on socialism in the Netherlands during the twentieth century. Bonger, for example, co-authored the main interwar policy statements of the Dutch Labour Party and influenced the work of postwar social democratic policymakers.

While Pannekoek and his collaborators published their ideas mainly in the Marxist journal *De Nieuwe Tijd* ('The New Era'), the main vehicle that Bonger used to propagate his views was *De Socialistische Gids* ('The Socialist Guide'), the official scientific journal of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij, SDAP). Bonger not only used it to further his own brand of scientific socialism, but also a specific type of socialist intellectual. Bonger explicitly favoured a modern type of scientist; a rational and 'cold-blooded' thinker, as opposed to the other, at times extravert and emotional, kinds of intellectuals of the (radical) left. Both journals represented a distinct intellectual tradition within the SDAP. As such, they form important sources for the intellectual history of the SDAP. *De Nieuwe Tijd* has been the subject of an in-depth study by Henny Buiting, but *De Socialistische Gids* has hardly been of interest for historians so far.[2] This is unfortunate because, as this paper will illustrate, such an exploration demonstrates the broad array of ideas that existed within the party on the relation between science, ideology, and politics.

1 See Gerber 1989.

2 For one of the very few articles on De Socialistische Gids, see: Faassen 1980.

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This paper begins by briefly discussing Pannekoek's ideas on scientific socialism. It subsequently analyses how Bonger sought to popularize his vision of scientific socialism as editor of the journal *De Socialistische Gids* and in debates with other Dutch socialists. The paper closes with a brief discussion of Bonger's influence and the differences between him and Pannekoek. In doing so, this paper places Pannekoek in perspective and illustrates the differing ideas in the labour movement on what scientific socialism was and the conflicting conceptions of the role of science in socialist politics.

Anton Pannekoek on Scientific Socialism

Undoubtedly, Pannekoek saw his writings on socialism as scientific exercises. Being an astronomer by profession, his scientific endeavours were not limited to the observatory.[3] Contributing to the development of Marxism and theorizing about historical materialism, religion, and philosophy provided a similar 'scientific experience' as mapping and analysing the Milky Way. Studying the stars and studying society were equally serious and important undertakings. Even more so, for Pannekoek both activities were related. He considered the study of socialism to be complementary to the natural sciences. Pannekoek made this view explicit during a seminar for physics students in the autumn of 1940, just after the occupation of the Netherlands by Nazi-Germany. There, he claimed that natural sciences had thrived during the nineteenth century and enabled the dominance of men over nature. The natural sciences had however failed to show men how to organize society. According to Pannekoek, socialism sought to do exactly this.[4]

Addressing the students, Pannekoek compared society with a living and growing organism: 'We have seen how steam capacity in machines increased hundredfold, how electricity has grown into an encompassing neural network, how all bodily organs have gained in efficiency. What this organism is still lacking, however, is a conscious mind.' In Pannekoek's view, society had remained a 'headless monster, whose limbs tear itself apart', an explicit reference to the war.[5] While the science of production needed 'no further improvement for the time being', what was now necessary was a collective 'understanding of the social forces' that drove society. This

3 For more information on Anton Pannekoek, see biographical studies: Welcker 1986; Gerber 1989.

4 Anton Pannekoek, Wetenschap en maatschappij, 1940, AP, inv.no. 244.

5 Pannekoek, Wetenschap en maatschappij, 6.

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knowledge could not be produced by engineers, but had to 'grow forth from the masses'.[6] According to Pannekoek, scientific socialism did not coincide with the natural sciences. Rather, it was a social science, a science of the human mind. Its goal was to gain an understanding of the human mind in general and of the working-class mind in particular. In doing so, it combined the 'science of society, psychology, philosophy'. Pannekoek argued that an understanding of the human mind through these sciences was a necessary step towards establishing a socialist society. The working class needed to achieve a certain state of consciousness. The mental awakening that Pannekoek envisioned, preceded the formation of a socialist society. He thus concluded: 'This mental development is a scientific development.'[7]

Pannekoek's view of socialism as a science could be seen as representative for the first generation of Marxist intellectuals in the Netherlands. From 1896 onwards, this group publicized their views in a monthly journal devoted to Marxist ideas, politics, and culture, *De Nieuwe Tijd*, which was named after its German counterpart. Among its well-known and influential contributors were the famous poets Henriette Roland-Holst and Herman Gorter, literary critic and co-founder of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, Frank van der Goes, and Anton Pannekoek.[8]

Their ideas, however, did not remain uncontested for long. From the 1910s onwards, the socialist criminologist Willem Bonger challenged Pannekoek's conception of socialism-as-science by formulating a very different idea of how science and socialism were related. Like Pannekoek, Bonger was an academic with a high-standing reputation. Bonger had studied law in Amsterdam and in 1922 became the first professor in criminology in the Netherlands.[9] If Pannekoek had a metaphysical idea of how socialism was a science, Bonger's socialism could be described as an applied science. For Bonger, socialism was not a method for understanding society, but rather a means for literally *making* society. Propagating an explicitly practical approach, Bonger proposed to study society empirically and discover its laws of development in order to assess how scientific insights could be applied to establish a socialist society. His focus was not so much on labour politics per se, or its underlying ideological propositions, but rather on policy development driven by socialist ideals. Unlike Pannekoek, Bonger did not believe that a socialist society would result from a socialist revolution, but

6 Pannekoek, Wetenschap en maatschappij, 7.

7 Pannekoek, Wetenschap en maatschappij, 10.

8 For more information on *De Nieuwe Tijd*, see: Buiting 2003.

9 For more information on Bonger see: van Heerikhuizen 1987.

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rather believed that it had to be made or built by the right policy decisions. In his view, engineers, mathematicians, doctors, criminologists, economists played a key role in the forthcoming of a socialist society; not 'the masses', nor the philosophers, poets, or literary critics trying to unravel the working-class mind as Pannekoek believed. For Bonger, practising socialism as a science meant practising disciplines like economics, criminology, mathematics, and medical studies. He saw socialism as an 'applied' science.[10]

The Development of Bonger's socialism

Willem Bonger was born on 6 September 1876 in Amsterdam in a large liberal family. At the University of Amsterdam, he became acquainted with socialism through the student circle *Clio*. Bonger was attracted to socialism for its humanistic appeal and he vividly discussed its premises, both orally and in written form. For the student newspaper *Propria Cures*, he wrote an article on 'socialism and being a student'. Soon after, he joined the more overtly political Socialist Reading Circle (Socialistisch Leesgezelschap, SL).

The SL consisted of young students, most of whom had a bourgeois background. The group was close to the SDAP – although SDAP membership was optional – functioning as a bridge between student life and the party.[11] In 1900, Bonger became president and under his leadership, the society became an active organization with over a hundred members. It circulated a portfolio of socialist magazines such as *Die Neue Zeit*, *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, *Le Mouvement Socialiste* and *De Nieuwe Tijd*. The international outlook of SL was corroborated by invitations to Emile Vandervelde, Edward Anseele, and Karly Kautsky. Besides prominent Marxists, Bonger also invited liberal thinkers to speak for the students – a move that was controversial among the SL members. Bonger, however, claimed that only debate could strengthen the arguments in favour of socialism and its theoretical basis. Moving away from his early views, Bonger started to emphasize that the strength of socialism lay in its scientific foundation, rather than its humanist appeal to empathy and solidarity.

Bonger's outlook was strongly influenced by Karl Kautsky. Since the late 1890s, Kautsky was considered to be the most influential Marxist thinker on the continent, to the point he became known as the 'pope of Marxism'.

10 Bonger 1925.

11 van Veldhuizen 2015, 175.

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Kautsky popularized Marxism as a positivist 'scientific' worldview that proclaimed that the development of capitalism would inherently lead to revolution through the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few. At the same time, it placed this development in a far future, thus legitimizing moderate and reformist politics. Because of this, 'Kautskyan Marxism' was open to multiple interpretations.[12] Both radical and moderate socialists could endorse it.[13] It informed the influential *Erfurter Programm* of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) as well as the party programme of the SDAP. Bonger spoke out ever more clearly in favour of Kautsky's Marxism; at first in the student newspaper *Proria Cures*, and later in his dissertation. Focusing on the social dimension of crime, Bonger's 1905 dissertation *Criminalité et conditions économiques* was clearly inspired by Marxist ideas. In it, Bonger analysed how social relations determined crime rates. Capitalism increased poverty but at the same time the desire for material wealth. This way, capitalism not only affected the working class but also the bourgeoisie and created the conditions for criminal behaviour.[14]

Rather than exploring social relations philosophically, Bonger used statistical methods to uncover causal relations between economic conditions and human behaviour. Being aware of the limitations of this approach, he also did complementary qualitative research. His conclusion, however, was utopian: in a socialist society, Bonger claimed, there would be no crime. It was typical for Bonger's view that human behaviour could be reduced to societal conditions. Years later, in 1932, Bonger weakened his conclusions, admitting that even in a socialist society criminal behaviour would continue to exist, since some people were simply 'bad'. For this, however, Bonger had another, quite practical, solution: eugenics. Sifting out criminal genes would end criminality once and for all. Such ideas were not uncommon within the socialist movement at the time and in Bonger's case, the turn to eugenics again underlines his continued belief in the power of policy measures to make a socialist society.[15]

It was exactly this belief – that a socialist society could be *made* – that motivated Bonger to accept the position of editor of *De Socialistische Gids* at the end of 1915. This journal had been founded as the official scientific journal of the SDAP by its executive board following various failed attempts

12 For more information on Kautsky, see: Hünlich 1992; Salvadori 1979; Steenson 1978.

13 Buiting 1989, 629.

14 Bonger 1905.

15 Lucassen 2010.

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to take over *De Nieuwe Tijd*, and the turn of several of the journal's members to the communist party. In their decision, the SDAP leaders were driven by the ambition to tie critical intellectuals to the party and neutralize criticism from independent intellectuals within the party, who called for a more principled politics. In various ways, the new journal was to function as a 'safety valve', allowing for debate but primarily under the control of the party leadership.[16] Seen from a grassroots perspective, it is hard to miss that the foundation of the party's first official scientific journal also responded to urgent calls from local party branches, who felt that such a journal was crucial in their efforts to educate the working class. They hoped the journal would provide 'popular scientific leadership and education'.[17] Various actors thus shared a belief that a scientific journal was necessary for the party's development, but each of them had their own arguments and held different ideas on what the journal was supposed to look like.

Bonger was generally regarded as the ideal candidate to lead the new journal. He was a renowned academic and an experienced writer and editor. Furthermore, he had concerned himself with several educative initiatives within the party. Most importantly, however, he was a moderate socialist. After the left Marxists had split from the SDAP in 1909, Bonger had taken an explicitly moderate stance and downplayed his original Marxist views.[18] He no longer believed in a socialist revolution, but remained faithful to the idea of establishing a socialist society. He knew several critical intellectuals within the party, but had not been part of any oppositional group himself. This made him an ideal figure to reconcile the more critical and more moderate wings within the party. With nine votes to one, the executive board of the party voted in favour of his candidacy. Bonger agreed but sought to negotiate the terms of his appointment.[19] His request for a higher salary was met with hesitation by several board members, who claimed that the editor would only have to review proposed texts, while others supported Bonger and his ambition to be a more proactive editor. Ultimately, his salary was raised to a mere 750 guilders a year. After the issue was settled, Bonger feverishly started working on the new journal. From the very start, it became clear that he would not simply act as an editor but that he had a clear agenda for *De Socialistische Gids*.

16 Notulen partijbestuur en dagelijks bestuur, 17 April 1915, SDAP, inv.no. 27.

17 Congresverslag 1914, SDAP, inv.no. 263.

18 For more information on the SDAP during this period, see: Buiting 1989.

19 Notulen partijbestuur, 23 October 1915, SDAP, inv.no. 27. Not all members of the SDAP board where present during the vote: those present: Vliegen, Schaper, Loopuit, Hermans, Bergmeyer, De Roode, and Matthysen; not present: Hoejenbos, van Kuykhof, and Troelstra.

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Different Expectations of Science

In the very first issue of *De Socialistische Gids*, Bonger immediately made his vision of the journal explicit. He published an article written by the well-known engineer Theo van der Waerden on the new production model developed by Winslow Taylor. Aiming to increase efficiency, Taylor proposed a system of production the main feature of which was the production line, reducing complex work to a series of simple tasks for each worker. The choice for this article was typical for Bonger. It focused on an economic issue, was written by an engineer and contributed to the understanding of the labour process. At the same time, the mathematical models and economic laws applied by Taylor, and explained by Van der Waerden, were not written for workers, even those who were educated. Rather, the text was academic in content and style. It was exactly what Bonger wanted for *De Socialistische Gids*.

Bonger was the dominant voice in the editorial board of this journal, which generally consisted of five members. He fully dedicated his time and energy to the journal and as a result singlehandedly formed it into an intellectual forum for the rational and 'cold-blooded' thinkers, who he believed were essential for the development of the socialist movement. Amongst Bonger's favourites were the engineer Van der Waerden, the economic historian N.W. Posthumus, and the economist J. van den Tempel. They wrote on economy, physics, and statistics. But even medical studies were discussed in *De Socialistische Gids*. Bonger explicitly sought to promote the exact and social sciences as opposed to the humanities as he believed socialist policies needed to be based on the former.[20]

Soon, however, Bonger's choice of topics and the format of the journal led to criticism. One critic, for example, judged that however 'interesting' Van der Waerden's paper was, 'now' (i.e. 1915) was not the time to 'spend hours studying this kind of literature'.[21] According to many, the ongoing world war had put science on a second tier, a sentiment that was even shared by some of the editors of *De Socialistische Gids*. Meanwhile, SDAP board members expected the journal to cover more popular and politically acute

20 This did not mean that articles on arts and humanities were completely missing from *De Socialistische Gids*. Under pressure of the publishers short entertaining pieces were published in 1925 and 1926. From 1931 onwards, a column called 'Film, Music, and Architecture' appeared in the magazine.

21 Opwaarts, Orgaan van den Bond van Christen-Socialisten, 28 January 1916, DSG, no. F2.

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topics. SDAP president Pieter Jelles Troelstra hoped to provide answers to specific political controversies related to the war and socialist politics by means of the journal. Rudolf Kuyper, another party leader, on the other hand, preferred the journal to reflect on Marxism and socialist theory. Contrary to what Marxist theory had predicted, labour movements in all European countries supported their governments' decision to go to war. For Kuyper, theoretical reflection was now necessary in order to rethink socialism. When Bonger appeared unwilling to take 'his' journal in either of these directions, this resulted in fierce debates. Two of which will be shortly discussed here, to illuminate not only Bonger's views, but also those of his co-editors.

By the end of 1917, Troelstra argued that *De Socialistische Gids* had failed to discuss 'the greatest problems of the imminent future'.[22] He specifically referred to the 'ministerial question'; the question of whether the SDAP should join a liberal-led coalition government. Since universal male suffrage was to be granted to the Dutch population in 1917 (women would gain the vote two years later), the SDAP expected a sizable increase of votes. A few years earlier, in 1913, it had been decided that only in the case of 'utter necessity', the party would join a coalition government with liberal parties.[23] According to Troelstra, such a situation had developed by 1917 but others disagreed. The following year, the situation became more complex when Troelstra attempted to start a socialist revolution and failed. In the resulting debate on parliamentary versus revolutionary politics, Troelstra expressed his views in *De Socialistische Gids* in an article where he defended his failed revolution.

The article provoked strong reactions. Bonger attacked Troelstra's politics as well as similar politics propagated by Henriette Roland Holst. Typical of his line of reasoning was his dismissal of the arguments of Roland Holst as unscientific. Bonger called her text a 'volcano of emotions' and the expression of 'a restless and impatient artist-temperament, that wished to skip some phases in the development of society'.[24] Denouncing a socialist revolution, Bonger wrote: 'The home that will one day house a prosperous mankind will be large and strong. Like everything man-made, however, it will arise stone by stone and not suddenly, like a castle in the air'.[25] Troelstra's response was sarcastic. He called Bonger an 'extremist of legality, of

22 Notulen redactievergadering, 17 December 1917, DSG, no. A1.

23 Congresbesluiten 1913, SDAP, no. 262.

24 Bonger 1919, 333.

25 Bonger 1919, 361.

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"moderation" and "sobriety"'.[26] Troelstra defended Roland Holst's emotional appeal, claiming that 'by reducing the results of world events to mere mathematics, the soul and inner foundation of the revolution is dismissed and its actual legitimation discarded.'[27] According to Troelstra the coming of a socialist society required something more than scientific insights, namely emotional involvement.[28] Science clearly had a different meaning for Troelstra than for Bonger. For Troelstra, it was a trump card, to be played every once in a while in favour of his own political position. The label 'scientific' gave him prestige and lent a certain weight to his party-political manoeuvres, not only within the SDAP but also in other arenas such as parliament. Being part of the editorial board of *De Socialistische Gids* served his position within the SDAP, and at the same time the journal was one of his instruments of power.

The second example discussed here is an argument in 1926 between Bonger and Kuyper, who was also a member of the editorial board. Their argument revolved around the role of intellectuals within the socialist movement. In a speech for socialist students in 1925, Bonger had claimed that the SDAP faced a shortage of intellectuals. Since he believed the SDAP to be a 'constructive party' destined to one day rule the country, he regarded this as a serious problem.[29] Bonger's explanation for the lack of intellectuals in the SDAP was that the party did not appreciate intellectual work enough. He therefore argued in favour of better compensation for contribution to journals and other publications. Kuyper disagreed with Bonger and stated that not a lack of appreciation, but a lack of emotional appeal kept intellectuals away from the party. Moreover, Kuyper held *De Socialistische Gids* responsible, which in his view had become a beacon of 'one-sided, intellectualist dryness and scholasticism'.[30] The journal lacked any emotional appeal, and thus failed to attract younger intellectuals and artists.[31]

Kuyper subsequently stated that *De Socialistische Gids* should take as its example the new socialist youth organization, the *Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale,* which explicitly cultivated a socialist culture and mentality.[32] Bonger was not impressed. In his view, it was nothing more than a 'German import product'

26 Troelstra 1919, 513.
27 Troelstra 1919, 577.
28 Hagen 2010.
29 Bonger 1919, 361.
30 Kuyper 1926a, 367.
31 Kuyper 1926a, 365-366.
32 For more information on the *Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale* and its most prominent leader Koos Vorrink see: Hartveld, de Jong Edz., and Kuperus 1982; Wiedijk 1986; Wiedijk and Harmsen 1988.

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and 'a romantic sect'.[33] Again, Bonger opposed a strong emotional appeal. He wrote: '[T]hose who wish to experience emotion should not join the labour movement [...] but go to the theatre or concert hall instead.'[34] What the socialist movement needed, according to Bonger, was professionals who were able to hold their emotions in check. He even went so far as to equate Kuyper's position with that of utopians, searching for an ideal society in a faraway place. On such journeys 'skilful seamanship and hard labour are required', not 'aestheticians' who soon lose their interest. 'Emotions', Bonger claimed, 'are not entirely resistant to seasickness'.[35]

> Devising the New is not as easy as one would think, since food and shelter must be secured. Imaginary manna cannot be eaten and people cannot live in castles in the air. Those who seek emotions soon had enough and wanted to 'go home'. But the workers kept at it, because they wish to realize what they had in mind, if not for themselves, then at least for the next generations.[36]

A furious Kuyper wrote a reply which was so aggressive in tone that the editors publicly denounced his style.[37] Kuyper argued that the youth movement at least secured a 'minimum level of ideology', which counterbalanced the matter-of-fact tendency stimulated by *De Socialistische Gids*.[38] What the party really suffered from was a rigid and uninspired atmosphere and for this, Kuyper blamed Bonger. From the start, Kuyper had sought to use the journal as a platform for the theoretical development of Marxism, just as *De Nieuwe Tijd* had done before. Constantly frustrated in his efforts, Kuyper decided to leave his position as editor of *De Socialistische Gids* in July 1926.

For Kuyper, practising socialism as a science meant discussing and popularizing Marxism. It had nothing to do with statistics, economic analysis or even medical topics; issues that were central in Bonger's approach. Bonger focused on politics and policy proposals, while Kuyper wished to prolong an intellectual tradition introduced and embodied by *De Nieuwe Tijd*-group.

33 Bonger 1926, 378.
34 Bonger 1926, 381-382.
35 Bonger 1926, 382.
36 Bonger 1926, 382.
37 Van der Waerden to Johan Frederik Ankersmit and Willem Vliegen, 23 April 1916, PJT, no. 756.
38 Kuyper 1926b, 479.

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Engineer of Technocracy

With *De Socialistische Gids*, Bonger introduced a new way of doing science in the SDAP. Exact and social sciences were explored and moderate professionals given a stage. It was the result of the way Bonger viewed science and its relation to socialism and the SDAP. When Bonger spoke of science, he thought of applied science. For Bonger, the goal of science was intervening in and shaping society. It was explicitly practical and pragmatic. He did not embrace the philosophy of science that had been dominant in the socialist movement up to that moment, which had been strongly influenced by Marx and Hegel. Hegel had presented philosophy, together with religion and art, as the highest branches of science. These sciences enabled self-reflection and were therefore considered crucial for human progress. According to Bonger, on the other hand, the applied sciences were the means of social progress.

In 1925 Bonger thus asked a group of students:

> What can socialism be for idealistic intellectuals? […] It is a beautiful ideal in its own right […] but the meaning of socialism goes much further. It is not the ideal of placing one class over another. Rather, it is the making of a society of cooperating forces of manual and collar workers.[39]

For Bonger, socialism not merely expressed a political aspiration; it was the *making* of a socialist society. Thus, science stood at the core of Bonger's political beliefs. Because of this, socialism was an amalgamation of political worldview and scientific knowledge.

As such, Bonger remained convinced of the necessity of actively manufacturing a socialist society. He dismissed revolutionary politics and arousing working-class spirits as a means towards that goal. Instead, he laboured to develop policy measures that could change society in a socialist direction. He held a firm belief that in this way, not only society, but even human nature could be changed. Although he firmly believed in socialism, he was neither a supporter of Kautsky nor the 'revisionist' Eduard Bernstein. With his applied-science approach, Bonger developed his own brand of scientific socialism. He believed in the malleability of society and envisioned a key role for professionals, making his socialism close to technocratic. Bonger used *De Socialistische Gids* to express his views within the SDAP, since he believed that the party was destined to govern and able to realize his vision. Publishing *De Socialistische Gids* was his contribution to the socialist cause.

39 Bonger 1925, 1011.

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However, Bonger not only expressed his views in *De Socialistische Gids*. There were other opportunities for him to further his programme, of which the Report on Socialization (*Socialisatie-rapport*, 1920) is the best example. Next to Bonger, the engineers Theo van der Waerden and Jan Goudriaan and several party board members contributed to the programmatic text on how to socialize the means of production through (parliamentary) democracy. The Report proposed a gradual overtaking of key industries by the state. Remarkably, however, the arguments in favour of such a move were not political but focused on supposed gains in economic efficiency.

In the 1930s, Bonger's views were partly adopted by a new generation of socialist intellectuals. Two of his former students, Jan Tinbergen and Hein Vos, wrote the key text, *Plan van de Arbeid* ('Planned Labour', 1935), where social inequalities and tensions were approached from an economic and statistical perspective, closely related to the way Bonger worked. Economic planning was proposed as a way to counter the economic crises and improve the welfare of the working class. However, distinct from Bonger's Report on Socialization, the goal was now to find a new balance within a capitalist system, rather than the establishment of a socialist society.

A similar mixture between admiration and criticism can be found in another of Bonger's students, Hilda Verwey-Jonker. She had graduated on a thesis supervised by Bonger and once prompted her fellow socialist students to 'work hard and think of Bonger'.[40] Nevertheless, in 1931, Verwey-Jonker and her friends, the so-called 'kenteringsocialisten', wrote a letter to the party board, complaining about Bonger's leadership of *De Socialistische Gids*. They argued that the journal had failed to develop 'a generally accepted, all-encompassing and well-developed socialist "ethics", which could guide our actions'.[41] The letter echoed the earlier complaints of Kuyper, claiming that *De Socialistische Gids* was too down to earth and lacked a sense of idealism. One of the reasons for their criticism was the fact that the new generation did not share Bonger's irrefutable belief in a socialist society. They embraced Bonger's notion of making and shaping society through policy measures, but dismissed his premise that this would lead to a socialist society. Because of it, rethinking socialist ideals and ethics was more important than it had been for Bonger. The difference in worldview and mentality caused the younger group to start its own journal: *De Sociaaldemocraat*. By doing so, they took a new direction, just as Bonger had done in response to *De Nieuwe Tijd* group.

40 Quoted in van der Steen 2011, 88.

41 Kenteringsocialisten to the SDAP board, 21 April 1931, SDAP, no. 2739.

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Conclusion

In the 1890s, Anton Pannekoek and his collaborators introduced classical scientific socialism in the Netherlands, seeking to contribute to the socialist struggle through theoretical explorations and popularizations of Kautskyan Marxism. This intellectual tradition was taken in a different direction by Pannekoek's contemporary Willem Bonger. Originally, Bonger was inspired by Kautskyan Marxism, but soon he dismissed the idea of a socialist revolution and developed the idea of socialism as an applied science. Instead of approaching socialism as a reflective study of society, he promoted a socialism that was practical and pragmatic. Based on statistical and technical knowledge, policies were devised which would further the socialist cause. Bonger's firm belief in his own programme explains the dedication and fierceness with which he did his job as editor of *De Socialistische Gids* and the fights he picked with co-editors, party board members, and other critics. The closed and exclusive nature of his programme disgruntled many, but because he had a clear agenda for the journal, Bonger was unwilling to compromise. For him, the journal was a means to express his own interpretation of socialism and – by advancing the exact and social sciences – of quite literally manufacturing a socialist society. This coincided with his core ideological belief that, above anything, socialism was the science of making a socialist society. This redefinition of socialism-as-science subsequently influenced a younger generation of socialist intellectuals on how science, ideology, and politics were related. This younger generation developed its own intellectual tradition, just as Bonger had done before them. Bonger's thinking in terms of malleability and his focus on policy design became central aspects of post-war social democratic thinking, even if his strong belief in manufacturing a socialist society was dismissed.

Bonger poses an interesting and illuminating example of the ways in which socialist intellectuals thought about science, ideology, and politics. In many ways, he can be seen as a counter example to Pannekoek. Bonger put science at the core of his ideological and political programme. Applied sciences were not just a *means* to carry out socialist politics, they formed an integral part of Bonger's socialism. In comparison, the natural sciences, which Pannekoek mastered as part of his academic position, did not form a part of Pannekoek's Marxism. Rather, Pannekoek considered natural sciences and socialism to be distinct but complementary. The differences between Bonger and Pannekoek are remarkable since the two men had many things in common. They were scientists, contemporaries, both embraced Marxism in their younger years, and had become members of the SDAP because of

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it. Nevertheless, Bonger was far from the Marxist that Pannekoek was. As a result, he did not share Pannekoek's international prestige within the labour movement. While Pannekoek in many ways remained an orthodox Marxist philosopher, Bonger developed himself into an engineer of technocracy.

Archives

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DSG Archief De Socialistische Gids, Maandschrift der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
PJT Archief Pieter Jelles Troelstra. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
SDAP Archief SDAP. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

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About the Author

Annemarie Rullens studied Political Culture and National Identities at Leiden University. Her research focused on the relationship between socialist politics, science, and ideology in the Netherlands in the first half of the twentieth century. By analysing the writings of a group of intellectuals within the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij, SDAP) she researched the meaning of science for the party and its influence on political thought. Currently, Rullens works as a consultant for both the public and private sector.

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