Should Workers Think?

BY "PROGRESS"

AS for Marx, although he observed phenomena and the economic facts of past and present society, it could not be said that he actually experimented with such gigantic processes, any more than an astronomer can with the stars. But by means of histories of the past and newspapers of the present he could let his experiments practically make themselves for him; and so arrive at his generalisations of the Class War, the theory of Surplus value and the Materialistic view of History. Socialism at present is struggling to supply a practical rather than a theoretical verification of itself.

From now on, the writer is obliged to rush readers through the Land of Logic by express observation car and only point out a few of the higher mountain peaks of thought that meet us as we speed along the tracks. To start with the old metaphysics, mentioned by Engels in his "Socialism from Utopia to Science," these were based upon three primary Laws of Thought: the Law of Identity—whatever is, is: 2, the Law of Contradiction—nothing can both be, and not be: 3, the Law of Excluded Middle—everything must either be, or not be. Examples are: 1, the earth is the earth; 2, the earth cannot be the earth and at the same time a ball of fire; 3, Socialism must either be revolutionary or it is not Socialism at all. It is at once seen that this logic is perfectly rigid and unchanging, and Aristotle considered it necessary to lay down the above laws because they were the first principles of dialectical demonstration. Neither proper argument nor consistent reasoning were possible, if they were not taken for granted. Hence, Socrates, in Plato's dialogue "Euthydemus" refuses to argue further with two brothers who, by claiming that the answer No, does not exclude the answer Yes, beat all their opponents.

But at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new conception of the world began to make way, which culminated in the evolutionary theories of Darwin. This conception, already sensed by the ancient Greek, Heraclitus, considered all things as flowing, becoming, arising and disappearing; and not fast, firm and fixed; and gave support to the later Hegelian dialectic. Then, again, Aristotle's syllogism is only sound in nineteen forms of it; but later views of, and improvements on it, extended the valid forms to one hundred and eight. And yet, as Mill maintains, all correct reasoning is based on two direct elementary forms only—the affirmative and negative; and correct reasoning, too, must start from a general or universal proposition, and that means one which affirms or denies something about an entire class of things; as, all human beings are animals. But the latter form did not satisfy Mill, because he was out for "facts" to support his darling "objective inference." So he remodelled the syllogism into the following shape: "Whatever—A, is a mark of any mark—B, is also a mark of that—C, which this last (B), is a mark of. Thus, if A is a mark of B, and B is a mark of C, thenAalso is a mark of C. His expression for the general proposition, therefore, is not as defined above; but "One phenomenon always accompanies, (that is, is a mark of) another phenomenon." Thus, the phenomenon lodestone is always a mark of the phenomenon, attracting iron—affirmative form. The negative form is "no horses are web-footed," that is, the phenomenon horse is never accompanied by the phenomenon, web-footed. Other philosophers stressed the association of Ideas; but Mill was principally concerned with emphasising the association or non-association of phenomena.

Mill's inferential system is usable both for general or for limited ("particular") propositions, and is equally applicable to scientific, everyday or aesthetic purposes. An interesting instance of the "particular" aesthetic kind is afforded right in "our town," where we are happy in the fact that one of our bank managers possesses a truly British bull dog, whose snub nose, exposed teeth and combative expression of countenance have earned for him the first name of one of Mr. Jiggs' "disreputable" acquaintances—Dinty (Moore). This dog, being pretty human, is liable to go off on excursions on his own; but he is also sufficiently faithful and regular in his habits to stick fairly closely to his master. Accordingly, should one be standing in a doorway or about to turn a street corner, and then get a passing glimpse of "Dinty" or, vice versa, his master; then one will not be far out in amusingly applying the "particular" form of Mill's proposition—that the one phenomenon usually accompanies, that is, is often a mark of the other phenomenon—bull dog or bank manager, whichever first greets the eye. Doubtless it is too bad to employ such an elegant invention in the case of a humorously ugly-faced bull dog, but such may be the fate of the noblest of things; for it is related that a former head of the Scottish Capmbell clan—the great Duke of Argyle, signalised his seizure of the clan's communal lands by fencing them off; to the indignation at first of his evicted clansmen. But their resentment was subsequently changed into a deep feeling of gratitude when "the brave Gaels" discovered that they could utilise the triumphant signs of private landlordism, as cures for an itchy back. Whereupon the commonest expression upon their lips, when practising the remedy, was "Cot pless ta noble Tuke o' Argyle, for putting up such gr-r-a-and scr-r-atching posts!"

Another form of argument that deserves mention is the "disjunctive syllogism" which has both an affirmative and negative form. Example: Nationalism is either a curse or a blessing; but it is certainly a curse, therefore it is not a blessing. However, there are to the foregoing affirmative form, certain objections that do not apply to the negative form, which goes by the Latin name of the "modus tollendo ponens," meaning the mood or form which affirms by denying . Example: Socialism in Canada is either best served by the S. P. of C. or by the Communist Workers' Party; but it is not best served by the latter, and so it is best served by the S. P. of C. This negative form is not only very powerful, but is also capable of being put to such practical uses, that is should receive a wide recommendation.

Everyone knows the famous "collar-button" series of jokes which are such god-sends to professional humorists. An illustrated example of this kind showed a young man dressing himself up, with a large box filled with collar-buttons lying at his feet; so that, if he lost his regular button, all he had to do was to pick up a new one out of the big box. Now this box would be unnecessary if he systematically searched **without repeating any places,** every likely spot the button could be hidden under or in. And this applies to elusive pencils, pens, tools, brushes, etc., etc. After exhausting every possible hiding place, except **ONE,** it logically follows that having, in practise, denied its being in all other spots, that one spot is where the object shall be found on confidently diving down the hand to grab it. This system seldom or never fails, and if generally know and adopted, would throw hosts of comic writers and artists out into the Industrial Reserve Army! Anyanyrate, fellowworkers, give the "modus tollendo ponens" a fair trial; because, to paraphrase Marx, on Sundays, holidays or, indeed, at any other time, you have nothing to lose but a collar button, and a whole lot of time wasted in hunting for it, to gain!

For untangling the connections between causes and effects, Mill devised his four Inductive Methods, which could be reduced to two fundamental ones—1, the Method of Agreement; and 2, the Method of Difference. As to the first; suppose we suffer from national and also sex prejudices, and that in dealings one after the other with capitalists of various races and both sexes, we get "rotten" treatment from all. At first we are inclined to attribute the evils to the fact that the perpetrator was a Yankee, a Jew, a woman, a "Dago," and so on. But later experiences teach us that other persons may be Yankees, Jews, Dagoes or women and yet "good heads," and hence, no reliance can be placed on nationality or sex as likely causes of bad treatment. Then we learn that "the sole invariable (never absent) antecedent of a phenomenon is probably its cause," and knowin that in the above cases the invariable antecedents were the capitalist position and capitalist outlook, we pronounce these, and not nationalism or sex, as the causes of "bad actors." As to the Method of Difference: Suppose we had been living in some little village or other "Main Street" aggregation, and suffered severely from the ignorance, slanders and pettinesses of the place. A hasty view would turn one into human-being haters, if we had not moved to a far larger place where the life and people were quite the opposite to those of the miserable conditions and crowd we had left. As the **only different circumstance,** (supposing the larger town to be of the same province and its people of the same nationalty as the wretched village) is the bigger surroundings, we pronounce the village's unfavorable environments, and not its humanity, as the cause of all our past troubles.

And speaking of method, the celebrated Pascal stated that, in demonstrative writing, whilst it is advisable to pursue a middle course of not defining and proving things known to all persons, we yet should not use any word or term whose meaning we have not clearly explained; and secondly, never to put forward any proposition that can't be demonstrated by truths already known. In short, he adds, define all your terms and prove all your propositions. This, as far as one can follow it, is good advice, and if neglected makes written articles, especially for working class readers, a mere waste of time, materials and money. That the money spent on manuscript material alone is an item of some importance may be gathered from the fact that before Marx could get the paper on which to write his Cologne Communist trial pamphlet in 1852 he had to pawn his last coat!

So much for this imperfect sketch of a few phases of logic. Even when we are acquainted with the subject, the problem still remains how best to use our knowledge of it. Hence, Locke, the author of the celebrated "Essay Concerning Human Understanding," also wrote a smaller work which yet consisted of forty-five chapters on "The Conduct of the Understanding." The various old and new philosophies, such as Stoicism, New Thought, etc., etc., are all methods that profess to be best able to get the highest results from the minds trained by them. The philosophy of Nietzsche, in its aiming at the greatest in mankind, morals and art, advocates as the means thereto a ruthless and masterful suppression of everything subjective and objective, that stands as an obstacle to general perfection.

The better trained the human mind becomes the more accurately does it work, and a machine like precision of mental operation is no mean ideal to be aimed at. That is how nature works, as the old Stoics recognised; for, with them, everything is decreed by nature and fate, and nature and fate are the same as reason, providence and a healthy will. Hence, their supreme rule, which they practised in all things, was "to follow nature;" that is, the law which nature enjoins upon conscience and which is identical with the law that governs the world.

As we now know, thinking can be done by machinery, and has already, in various kinds of offices, displaced many clerks. Although the above mentioned seventeenth century French mathematician and philosopher, Pascal, invented the first calculating machine, it is little more than twenty-five years ago since this apparatus became a commercial factor in arithmetical operations. Now, arithmetic is a branch of mathematics; and Logic itself was regarded and treated by Dr. Boole, the widely known logician and mathematician, as a branch of mathematics. The "Canons" or Fundamental Principles

(Continued on page 8)