

The Psychology of Marxian Socialism

By H. RAHIM

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The following article forms the main part of an introductory chapter to Book I. of a series of eight books now in course of preparation on this subject. Book I. is now ready—61 pp., with a Preface by W. A. Pritchard—single copies, price 50 cents, in lots of 20, 35 cents a copy post paid.

The relatively high cost is explained by Comrade Rahim as due to the fact that financial straits have permitted the printing of only a few hundred copies. An encouraging reception to Book I. will enable him to proceed at once with Book II. The subject is important and on it a considerable amount of discussion and controversy prevails in Socialist periodicals nowadays. Treated from a Materialist standpoint and shorn of a certain mysteriousness and mysticism that generally surrounds it, Psychology, from the standpoint of a Socialist investigator should prove a welcome and interesting addition to our studies.

The Marxian School of Socialism considers as valid certain laws and principles governing social phenomena and explanatory thereof.

The object of this work is to substantiate those laws and principles in such a manner that, in the data of social phenomena, the physical side of the life activities of human society as well as its psychological correlates and aspects, shall be treated as complementary to each other as they are naturally found to exist, and thus make the Marxian view of the social problem more fully comprehensive.

If one looks at the vast amount of literature on Marxian Socialism, such as the earlier and classical works of Marx, Engels, Lafargue, Labriola, and the later ones by Dietzgen, Kautsky, Bax, etc., one is liable to find the Socialist Philosophy as well as the problems of the Socialist Movement efficiently discussed.

A few capitalist apologists engaged in teaching Sociology and Psychology in the public schools and universities have written some works on Social Psychology, but such a bias intrudes into these works, due to the writers' interests in capitalist and ecclesiastical domination of social institutions that, for the working class, they are neither to their purpose nor in the promotion of their interests.

The principles dealing with the psychological aspects of Socialism have not been presented heretofore to the workers and general reading public in such a manner as would illuminate the social problem on its mental side and be of practical utility in furthering those social adjustments urged from the working class point of view.

In the time of Marx and Engels, Psychology was treated as a branch of philosophy and had no *locus standi* of its own.

Take for instance, Engels' classic polemic against Duerhing, already referred to. He therein reviews the Greek philosophers, Anaxgoras and Democritus; the British philosophers, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke and Hume; and the philosophies of the Germans, Kant, Hegel and Duerhing, as these were recognised as advanced philosophers at that time.

Psychology is not referred to in those works as of any importance, as it then stood as a branch of philosophy dealing with the subjectivity of mind by introspection, or objectively concerned with phrenology's bumps.

The Science of Psychology is regarded today as a study which subjects the states of human consciousness called mind and all their correlate human-life activities called behavior, to qualitative and quantitative analysis, experimentation, research and generalization, just as any other science proceeds to deal with material phenomena.

A considerable amount of experimentation on different forms of organic life from the simple unicellular amoeba to the more complex forms, such as we see in insects, ants, bees, cats, dogs, monkeys, etc., has been made in order to find out the simplest types of the psychological traits correlated to their behavior, or responses.

Still more interesting observations and experiments have been made on the infants of the human species for the purpose of discovering what continuity can be de-

terminately established between animal and human life through the similarity or difference of psychological elements in these forms of life.

By the time an infant becomes an adult it is found that so much of its experience is forgotten or eliminated by selection and otherwise so segregated into a background of mental content that the adult will not, or cannot, recognize or ordinarily recall into consciousness parts of his own mind, owing to its conflicts with what is an established consciousness standard and system. (See Book VII. abnormal Psychology.)

An adult often does not know parts of his own mind and, therefore, himself, owing to the peculiar constitutional method of the mind mentioned in last paragraph. A study of child psychology is, therefore, of no less, if not of greater, importance than a study, of adult psychology.

A branch of Psychology called Abnormal Psychology studies all phenomena of unconscious or subconscious, segregation and displacement of mind parts, subnormal and feeble-minded, and the so-called geniuses, to supply the data of psychology.

The cumulative data of psychology gathered from the study of animal life, child life, abnormal individuals (which, however, constitute an insignificant number in society), and the normal adult person as a social being, and of the groups and races, is now fairly sufficient and so organized as can be applied with benefit to the problems of Sociology.

The psychology of mind or consciousness as correlated to the life of human society is no more an undetermined, vague speculation, but a fairly determined, practical science, and of practical utility to life, as great as the sciences of astronomy, chemistry, mechanics, physics and the useful arts.

The Marxian school has reduced social science to a few fundamental laws and principles, thus simplifying the whole social problem, the controversial element being reduced to a negligible minimum. There are yet extant a variety of "socialisms" like "Christian Socialism," "Democratic Socialism," "Laborism," and other utopian types, products of social interests.

The thinkers of the working class today however, are in agreement as to the fundamentals, such as **The Law of Surplus Value, The Theory of Value, The Economic or Materialist Interpretation of History,** and the principle of social evolution through class struggles, wherein, eventually, the working class, by abolishing classes through their numerical strength and intelligence, would usher in a new social order: The Co-operative Commonwealth.

The Socialist Movement lays emphasis upon the necessity of developing class-consciousness amongst the world's workers and an intelligence in the social problem as conditions on their mental side, along with certain failing economic conditions which the contradictions of the capitalist system of production and distribution are fast generating, in order that a desirable social reconstruction can be accomplished.

We have now the psychological data on human behavior and consciousness, together with the methods and processes of intelligence in the human species, which comprises a very large percentage of producers (working men and women) and a very small propertyed, unsocial, owning and exploiting group.

The physical conditions, the economic situations, and the changes in the means, instruments and methods of production directly affect the *status quo* of the well being and standard of living of the members of society.

At the time of writing society is in the midst of a great economic crisis involving the non-employment of millions of workers, and a keen struggle is to the fore with the working classes to maintain their standards of living which are in jeopardy through falling wages, increase of the workingday, and by the "open-shop" tactics of the employing classes, evidencing a given change in the behavior of members of the social organism.

It is the purpose of this work to investigate the relationships of social conditions and the behavior of the

members of society, and reduce these relationships to general principles and laws.

The mode of reasoning and enquiry followed in this work is what is called **Dialectics** in contrast with the modes or reasoning found in metaphysics and formal logic. The **Dialectic** is now recognized as the most accurate mode of investigating social and material history, principles of which are the following:—

(1) **Dialectics** take into account the positive fact that there is an unceasing change in everything: nothing is, everything is becoming.

(2) When two necessary conditions of an object appear to be contradictory to each other, and if a synthetic view by taking them together reconciles the contradictions, the problem may be taken as solved. Thus a Thesis and an Antithesis may become a unity by a Synthesis of the two views. As an illustration we may take the story of the two knights who fought over a shield made of gold on the one side and of silver on the other side, one holding it was made of gold and the other asserting that it was made of silver, each knight looking only at one side of the shield.

(3) **Dialectics** does not say yea yea, nay nay; it collects all data and then proceeds to treat it genetically, through all its relationships, into a whole view. Engels has devoted a whole chapter to **Dialectics** in his book "Socialism Utopian and Scientific" (pp 76-reasoning in contrast with the defects of the metaphysical mode in a sentence (page 80) which I quote here: "the metaphysical mode of thought . . . becomes one sided, restricted, abstract—lost in abstract contradictions. In the contemplation of the individual things, it forgets the connections between them. In contemplation of their existence, it forgets the beginning and the end of that existence; of their repose, it forgets their motion. It cannot see the wood for the trees."

A drop of water is at one time hydrogen and oxygen gases, at another time it is a fluid, still another time it is solid (ice) and it may exist as vapour. To understand it it must be viewed in all its relationships, and it is exactly the same with the problem of society. 16

Marx and Engels collected the data of history from the time of the primitive communes to the date of their career, that is the state of capitalist development then extant. By applying the Dialectics to this data they were able to formulate the laws of human society as we find them in their written works and which the best of the economists and the socialists of today take into consideration when the problem of society is discussed.

When the laws of the social conditions and human behavior are explained in Psychological terms under the guidance of the dialectical mode of analysis, the mental side of the social problem will have been described in as simple terms as the Marxian theories of the Law of Value, the Materialistic Interpretation of History and the Class struggle which are derived from the study of the life history of the social organism.

It is intended to distribute the subject matter of this work into 8 books, so written that each can be studied separately. It will be left to the discretion of the student to read the books on the basis of the particular phase of the psychological aspect of Socialism he feels inclined to follow independently of the order here laid down.

Book I. Introduction to the Psychology of Marxian Socialism. The principles of nerve energy and the human nervous system.

The efficiency of the brain process is supposed to be. Neurons in this part are correlated to the states of consciousness, and therefore to the adaptive behavior of the organism. We repeat that the relationship of the nervous system with consciousness, behavior and general psychological phenomena is so intimate that one does not exist without the other as far as human knowledge is concerned. But this branch of study is very extensive and one must refer to the works specializing with the subject if one wants to study it in detail. All that was necessary here was to give a cursory but essential account of the principles of nerve energy and the nervous system.