REVIEWS

HUMAN NATURE AND CONDUCT. An Introduction to Social Psychology. By John Dewey, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University. New York. Henry Holt and Company, 1922. Pp. vii+336.

This work includes in an expanded form a series of lectures delivered at Leland Stanford University in the spring of 1918. The author states in the preface that it "Seriously sets forth a belief that an understanding of habit and of different types of habit is the key to social psychology, while the operation of impulse and intelligence gives the key to individual mental activity. But they are secondary to habit so that mind can be understood in the concrete only as a system of beliefs, desires and purposes which are formed in the interaction of biological aptitudes with a social environment." The interest in concrete human nature manifested by the above quotation seems to illustrate the general shift of emphasis in philosophy which has taken place particularly during the past generation. Man himself is now to be taken as the hub of the universe. But the stimulus which has prompted this shift of emphasis has not come entirely from the technical philosophers, as some would have us believe, but rather from social science itself. In following some of these scientific developments, philosophy has turned somewhat wistfully from the resonantly empty subject of the transcendental and the absolute to the more important problems which are related to human nature. The author's *Reconstruction in Philosophy* is an illustration of this change in attitude. Pragmatism is an attempted reconciliation between philosophy and the rest of the field of knowledge; and whether true or not this utilitarian belief has played a part in chilling the field of metaphysics and in stimulating the *psychological* study of man himself.

With the field of concrete human nature before us then, *habit* is the first thing that attracts the attention. What would a man be like if stripped of all his habits! To be sure, genetics should receive some consideration, but so also should oxygen and a favorable temperature, since life itself is dependent upon a certain condition of these things. What makes a man human, however, and important in the world, are largely his *habits*.

Several of the characteristics of habit elaborated in this book have already been discussed in earlier writings by the same author. Habits require coöperation between organism and environment, and in this respect they resemble functions. Thus, "Breathing is an affair of the air as truly as of the lungs; digestion an affair of food as truly as of tissues of the stomach" (p. 14). *Bad* habits which we have no intention of acquiring are also worthy of study. "All habits are demands for certain

kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they *are* will. They form our effective desires and they furnish us with our working capacities. They rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity" (p. 25). Acts never take place merely because of magical desires or wishes. The activity itself is a habit, and in this sense *habit means will.*

In spite of the brilliant application of the philosophy of habit to several important social problems, the discussion seems faulty in several respects when looked at from the psychological point of view. While objecting to the inner psychology of structuralism and mentalism, Professor Dewey now seems to place too much emphasis on customs and folk-ways. He also takes a seemingly unfair attitude towards psychology as a science. One might suppose from reading the criticisms of "current psychology" in this book that psychology consists solely of this book is concerned, that human nature, conduct, habit, impulse, etc., all exist in a disembodied state separate from and independent of a physical body. The author speaks of "habits" as if they originate spontaneously from "custom". At least an incidental reference to the human frame would have been in order. Although nothing is said about the psychological processes involved in the acquisition of habits, we feel that habit formation is to some extent at least an *individual* affair, and that the question of *how* these all-important habits are formed is a *psychological* question. Of course habit formation is dependent upon the reception of stimuli; but it is also dependent upon the existence of a certain kind of organism capable of reacting to these stimuli. The difference between a man and a tree cannot be explained solely by reference to the differences in the "social stimuli" which they have received. To place great emphasis on the social stimuli and almost completely ignore the individual himself is to stress only one side of the question.

This external point of view does not justify the numerous references to "social *psychology*". Not only is it impossible to reconcile this *sociological* point of view with psychological fact, but it is also impossible to reconcile it with the pragmatic doctrine, however flexible and convenient this belief may be. According to Professor Dewey, a *science* of psychology has not yet appeared. "Signs of its coming into existence are present in the movements in clinical, behavioristic and social (in its narrower sense) psychology" (p. 324). The author has apparently not maintained a strong interest in psychology in recent years.

While discussing Professor Dewey's claims for habit we have at the same time set forth most of the objections to *instinct*. The terms impulse and instinct are used as practically synonymous. Instinct is somewhat objectionable because of the older notion, still current to some extent, that it is definitely organized and adapted. Impulse may be preferred in some instances because it suggests something primitive, loose, undirected, and initial. The concept of fixed and independent instincts is

brilliantly criticized and discussed in connection with important social problems. Thus Professor Dewey objects to the use which the conservative on various social questions has made of the common prejudice in favor of native tendencies. Custom is more fixed than instinct! "The conservative who begs scientific support from the psychology of instincts is the victim of an outgrown psychology which derived its notion of instinct from an exaggeration of the fixity and certainty of the operation of instincts among the lower animals. He is a victim of a popular zoölogy of the bird, bee and beaver, which was largely framed to the greater glory of God. He is ignorant that instincts in the animals are less infallible and definite than is supposed, and also that the human being differs from the lower animals in precisely the fact that his native activities lack the complex ready-made organization of the animals' original abilities" (p. 107). No reference or acknowledgment is made in this discussion to any of the well-known studies of instinct in the lower animals, which might have been profitably included in the book.

Much of the material on the place of intelligence in conduct has already been elaborated in earlier writings by the same author, particularly in *Democracy and Education* and in *How We Think*. Habits condition intellectual efficiency. They are the sole agents of observation, recollection, foresight and judgment; and the concepts of mind, consciousness and soul are superfluous. "The scientific man and the philosopher like the carpenter, the physician and politician know with their habits not with their 'consciousness'" (p. 182).

In conclusion, Professor Dewey claims that habit can also furnish a good basis for thinking and morals without excessive strain. Thinking is considered from the sociological point of view, and nothing is said about neurophysiological mechanisms. Morality is *social,* and has to do with all activity into which alternative possibilities enter. Moral science is not a separate department of life, but distinctly human, and is concerned with *present* rather than with future activity.

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PLEASURE AND BEHAVIOR. By Frederick Lyman Wells, Chief of the Psychological Laboratory, Boston Psychopathic Hospital. With an introduction by Joseph Jastrow, Professor of Psychology in the University of Wisconsin. New York. D. Appleton and Co., 1924. Pp. xvi+274. Price $2.50.

In this book, whose preface contains far more substance and much better writing than does any one of its ten chapters, Dr. Wells discusses the sources of pleasure and the relative values of certain types of conduct "in pleasure terms, not in terms of achievement". The publisher's advertising leaflet had announced a much more ambitious and conclusive discussion, which it is somewhat disappointing not to find in this book. Some restriction of subject matter is, of course, necessary in so brief a volume bearing so comprehensive a title. To the reviewer, every such