Review
Reviewed Work(s): Readings in Public Opinion: Its Formation and Control. by W. Brooke Graves; The Public and Its Problems. by John Dewey
Review by: Robert E. Park
Source: *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (May, 1929), pp. 1192-1194
Published by: The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2765906
Accessed: 16-04-2025 07:53 UTC

Readings in Public Opinion: Its Formation and Control. Edited by W. BROOKE GRAVES, with an Introduction by CLYDE L. KING. PH.D. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1928. Pp. xxxiv+1281. $6.00.

The Public and Its Problems. By JOHN DEWEY. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1927. Pp. vi+224. $2.00.

There are two references in Professor Graves's *Readings in Public Opinion* to John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems.* One reference calls attention to the fact that the volume was published in 1927, and the other states that it "deals especially with the problems of the public in the communtiy." It seems unfortunate that Dewey's little volume was not published earlier. If it had been, the author of *Readings in Public Opinion* might have conceived his task differently. At any rate, what the volume seems to lack is any fundamental and consistent conception of what the public is; its relation to society on the one hand, and to government and the state on the other. Such a conception would have enabled the author to organize his materials in regard to public opinion in such a way as to give his readers something more than an elaborate picture of the existing disorder of popular thought on the subject. *Readings in Public Opinion* is an interesting scrapbook into which apparently everything, from Floyd H. Allport's observations on the "prepotent reflexes" to Calvin Coolidge's statements on "the president's signature and the Veto of Bills," finds a place. Public opinion, the press, the pulpit, moving pictures and the radio; the task of the publicity man, the demagogue, the reformer; the influence of chambers of commerce and improvement associations, and the legislative lobby on public opinion, freedom of speech, the conflict of color, and the administration of justice—all are represented in one or more of the "readings" in this interesting volume. Some of the observations reproduced, notably those by A. Lawrence Lowell, Walter Lippmann, Edward Alsworth Ross, Rollo Ogden, Ivy L. Lee, James Bryce, Graham Wallas, and Frank I. Cobb make real contributions to our knowledge of public opinion. Others, like those of Sigmund Freund in the Group Mind and John B. Watson in Behaviorism, are apparently intended to supply (what is certainly much needed) some scheme of fundamental explanation which might reduce to order and make intelligible the wide range of materials which the volume covers. A good deal of what is written about the press and public opinion is merely hortatory or cynical, depending upon the temper of the writer. This, too, has found a place in the *Readings* and serves at least to exhibit the attitude of our

intelligentzia toward the newspaper and other agencies through which public opinion finds expression. Some of the best things in the book are by the editor. Professor Graves's analyses and documents at the end of the chapters are particularly valuable and stimulating.

This book will raise more questions than it answers, and, in the present state of our knowledge, that is all that could be expected or desired.

John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* is less a discussion of the public and public opinion than actually an oblique attack on the problem of the state. It is an attempt to describe the state realistically as a going concern rather than a philosophical abstraction defined in legal and normative terms. "The state," he says, "is the organization of public opinion. . . . . The obvious external mark of the organization of a public or of a state is thus the existence of officials."

The state is public opinion plus the formal organization through which, so to speak, public opinion is administered. Opinion, which may properly be called public, arises when some act of an individual or a group of individuals has consequences which affect others than those directly concerned. It arises when the acts of an individual or a group collide with the acts or interests of others. "Those indirectly and seriously affected for good or for evil form a group distinctive enough to require recognition and a name. The name selected is the public."

Anything becomes public when it seriously affects others than those directly concerned. Otherwise it remains a private matter. The state is, therefore, the institution that arises to deal with those matters which are public rather than private. The state is not a structure that is separated from public opinion. It is not something that is created out of hand, nor something divinely constituted, fixed, and unchangeable. "The belief in political fixity, of the sanctity of some form of state consecrated by the efforts of our fathers and hallowed by tradition, is one of the stumbling blocks in the way of orderly and direct change; it is an invitation to revolt and revolution."

The state is not to be identified with the form and the functionaries through which public opinion issues in action. On the other hand, this external and formal organization of public opinion and the legal and philosophical conceptions in which its functions are defined are no less a part of the state than the public opinion to which they give direction and expression.

The conception which men hold of the state is not something apart from the state itself, because the conception which men have of their relations to one another helps to make those relations what they are.

Ideas belong to human beings who have bodies, and there is no separation between the structures and the processes of the part of the body that entertains the ideas and the part that performs acts. Brain and muscle work together, and the brains of men are much more important data for social science than are the muscular system and the sense organs.

This means that the state, public opinion, moral ideas, and social attitudes are to be regarded as a part of nature. They are all parts of the cosmos, to be studied empirically, in all their changing forms and manifestations. As Dewey says, "By its very nature, a state is something to be scrutinized, investigated, searched for." The state is, to be sure, in part, at least, an idea, but ideas also have their natural histories.

ROBERT E. PARK

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

American Marriage and Family Relationships. By ERNEST RUTHERFORD GROVES and WILLIAM FIELDING OGBURN. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1928. Pp. xiii+497. $4.50.

When one views the flood of recent literature concerning marriage and the family one naturally asks, To what end is another book written? Groves and Ogburn frankly face this situation and answer that there is need of a text for college students, one which will present "substantial factual evidence and scientific methods of study." For as matters stand, "there is danger of turning the whole study into one of superficial discussion or sensational debate and presentation."

Some books are made up largely of historical, others of ethnographic, data, usually stressing the family as an institution rather than as a social group. Other writers concentrate on "problems of the modern family." Groves and Ogburn do neither, but undertake to set forth significant facts about family life in America today and to offer some suggested interpretations. Two-thirds of the book is occupied by the results of Ogburn's exhaustive statistical study based largely on the United States Census of 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1920. One-fourth consists of "evidence gathered from many efforts and tendencies of the present era, and from case studies of successful marriage" by Groves. The last forty pages are a discussion of methods of study.

In point of view, this book is almost entirely free from the usual setting of norms, eulogizing of the family as a sacred institution, viewing of its decadence with alarm, and pious exhortation to return to the true