

M. Bergson's Theories: What is their Permanent Importance?

Mind-Energy, Lectures and Essays, by Henri Bergson. Translated by H. Weldon Carr. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

"THE greatest philosophical luminary that has risen above the horizon for a long time"; such was the verdict on M. Bergson of a very eminent American philosopher. But he went on to say that he did not profess to understand all his thought. A dozen philosophic specialists could be mentioned who have made the same confession. William James, who by generous praise gave the first great impetus to M. Bergson's fame in England, remarked: "I have to confess that Bergson's originality is so profuse that many of his ideas baffle me entirely. I doubt whether any one understands him all over, so to speak." The greatest luminary does not appear to give a very clear light.

None the less in the years immediately before the war he was probably the object of a more widespread, a more nearly worldwide interest than any philosopher in history has during his life commanded. This was due in part, of course, to modern communications. But the fact remains that his impressiveness is exceptional. And since not even the specialists find him pellucid, it is obvious that he has conquered, not by clearly proving his point and compelling acceptance, but by the fascination and inherent acceptability of the ideas he propounds. The countless readers undrilled in the abc of philosophy who have found a certain thrill for the imagination in the current summaries of his philosophy, the numerous women of fashion who have listened to his lectures and derived sensations from his ideas, may be our witnesses. His volumes, crowded with arguments for these ideas, could not be called popular; but there is something in the ideas themselves which is unmistakably popular.

Can it be that the reason why the specialists do not fully understand him and the reason why the popular mind is drawn to him are connected—are consequences of one and the same fact? Can it be that the same trait makes his thought alluring to the mind's embrace and baffling to its understanding? Let us see.

Nothing makes much headway toward a full comprehension of M. Bergson but a long, plodding, minute study of his writings, the collation of passages, the persistent putting of questions about any difficulties in his meaning and the insistence upon finding the answers. Even this does not light up all the dark crannies. But it brings some interesting results. The philosophers mentioned had not bestowed this kind of labor upon him; they were busy bestowing it on the universe.

First of all, the broad features of his teaching familiar to all his readers must be recalled. He has published six volumes, all of which deal with the relation of matter to mind; each of which in one respect or another tries to show the ascendancy of mind over matter. The first book, *The Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated under the title *Time and Free Will*, argues that mind or consciousness is not, like matter, a subject of calculation, because it is not, like matter, a thing of quantity. It is not composed of separable units whose sum may be cast up; if it has any parts they are fused into one being. We could never calculate its future acts, for there are no calculable factors. Mind is "free."

The second book *Matter and Memory* argues that mind is not a *product* of matter (that is, of the material brain) for matter has no power of producing mind. The nature of mind has been misconceived. In reality the brain is the point at which mind, treating the present material situation in the light of memory, can act upon matter, through an original and ripe decision. Memory is not dependent on the brain, but by its own nature retains always the whole of one's past (such is M. Bergson's bold assertion) and is merely restricted and brought to bear by the brain. Moreover matter itself turns out to be a form of mind in disguise, a lower form produced by the mind's "running down." The tables are turned; matter is a product of mind.

In his third book, on *Laughter*, the theory is charmingly original. It is that we laugh only at people, not at things, and only then when people are behaving as if they were things. This book has sometimes been spoken of as though it represented an excursion quite apart from the author's philosophy and main interests, but in fact it is precisely in the line of them. It stands for the ascendancy of spirit and spontaneity over matter and necessity. The great joke is when a man, a free spirit, behaves as if he were an automaton, when he fails to *live*, with spontaneity or freedom, when he lets his habits or mannerisms or confirmed crotchets rule him, instead of making a fresh living response to a new situation.

An *Introduction to Metaphysics* (as the translation is called) deals with the proper method of philosophy. Philosophy has been impaired, M. Bergson maintains, by the encroachment of methods appropriate to matter only. Analysis, or the intellectual division of things into their parts, is a process appropriate to matter, but, as he sought to prove in his first book, not appropriate to that of living, continuous consciousness, which we are. Instead of seeking mentally to tear limb from limb, to dismember a living reality, we should rather seek to realize it as it is. This the author calls the method of intuition. It is, so to speak, the method of *being* the thing we wish to understand, so far as by imagination we can, rather than that of taking it apart and putting it together. It might also be called the method of sympathy. Living realities can indeed be approached analytically, if we desire. We do so rightly so far as we desire to take action with reference to the things studied, to foresee consequences, to calculate so far as calculation is possible. But so far as we wish really to face and see reality as it is, the external, analytic method is of no use. It merely substitutes some dead combination of units for the living, energizing thing.

The fifth and most famous book, *Creative Evolution*, maintains again the ascendancy of the mind's life over matter. It argues that living bodies, as we call them, are not a product of matter alone, but that psychic life, not dependent on body but slowly working out its will upon and through body, has developed organs that it requires and is still developing them. This effort and energy of life, which the author variously terms the "vital push," the "vital impetus," the "vital current," and which he compares to a wave and to a wind, has been the directive principle of the whole process. There was in living beings a bent, a tendency, a set toward seeing, for instance, that steadily pushed toward the creation of an eye. Here the method of intuition and not the method of physical analysis will avail us. It is when we lend ourselves to share the instinct of life itself that we comprehend something of the process. Physical or mechanical explanation is the device

of the intellect. But intellect is secondary, has only arisen for purposes of action, is useful for those purposes but cannot tell the truth about the nature of things. The intellect is intended "to think matter." It "feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds its fulcrum and our industry its tools." Our author extends his vitalism to the whole universe. He carries it into metaphysics. All matter, again he urges, is a low form of life, a form in which the tension or push of life is slackened.

Lastly, the present volume, *L'Energie Spirituelle*, translated Mind-Energy, consists of seven occasional addresses and essays, of which the most important are the last three, on Recognition, Effort, and Brain and Thought. It maintains and extends the ideas above.

What manner of mind is it that is behind these volumes, all densely packed, except perhaps the last? What are its characteristics?

1. First of all, for the man himself we must have unfeigned respect. He is careful. He scrupulously verifies what he tells us of scientific fact, of history, of the views of past authors. Before he ventures to deal with any concrete subject; such as aphasia, localization of functions in the brain, the process of animal evolution, he fairly immerses himself in the study of its literature and traces threads with patient fidelity. His work is in the highest tradition of scientific conscience, modesty, and self-respect. And there is something else. There is a certain fineness of fibre, taking two forms: fine observation and fine feeling. These contribute greatly to his results. In examining consciousness as a psychologist he sees it afresh and for himself. He does not yield his mind to the facile customs of thought about it that have prevailed. Examples of this are the very first chapter he published, on what is called intensity in consciousness, and that chapter in creative evolution where he is discussing the process by which evolution is supposed to have taken place. The man has sharp eyes. He looks a fact in the teeth. He does not call a lawn all green when the part in shadow is dark green and the part where the sun shines is greenish yellow. This, of course, is a priceless merit in a thinker. We may put it first amongst his distinctive traits.

2. He has a taste or rather a passion for originality or freshness of thought. This is allied with what has just been mentioned, his love of seeing a fact with a fresh, acute vision. His original ideas are remarkably numerous. He evidently has a kind of conscience about *filling* his books, furnishing them amply and even densely with new thoughts. His books do not appear to be consecutively written. They are put together. They are a kind of conscientious mason-work of his best ideas only, all the rest being left out—written by one who would dislike to leave any commonplace stretches or interstices in his work. Now this love of originality in his own work is one with his desire to find originality, creative quality, fresh emanation in the world and in life, one with his rejection of mechanism, one with his distaste for the notion that the past controls the future, one with the pertinacious strain of thought through all his books according to which human will, animal life, nay, the inmost reality of things, have spontaneity and exert a certain "tension" of original effort which may bring forth undreamt-of fruit. He has a deep love of the new, of change, of intellectual adventure. In other words, by his temper of mind this philosopher is romantic, akin to what in literature was called the Romantic School. He has every mark of that school. He has, we see, its taste for

the unfamiliar. He has its love of spontaneity. He has its frequent preference of intuition to reason. Like it he is fascinated by mystery and by sublimity in its wilder forms. Like it he is fascinated by personality, by the self, by its unique quality. These are deep-reaching influences in all he has produced.

3. There is another characteristic of his work which is also a characteristic of his world. He is always telling us that the mind or soul is not made up of separate parts like matter, that its parts are fused and inseparable. He cannot accept "the association of ideas" because that makes ideas separate elements and treats the mind like matter. All that we call different thoughts, emotions and the like which the mind has at one time, really, in M. Bergson's view, "interpenetrate." This is a beloved word of his. We cannot consider first one by itself and then another by itself without doing violence to the intermingling of their natures. Now whatever may be true of the mind this is certainly true of his writing. It is a curious trait. The parts are not rigorously divided. We never know when we have finished any subject. He will take up a problem and offer a solution; then state the problem again, introducing new difficulties, and give his solution with vital additions. Then a third version, etc. We never know but that we shall have the matter over again, with equally vital additions. We never know, therefore, that he means what he says to be taken as unqualifiedly true. His book goes forward somewhat as he says conscious life goes forward, "carrying the past with it" but not controlled by the past, and rolling up more and more of the theory as it goes.

This habit is largely due to our author's inability to see very far around him. He cannot survey his whole subject at once in clear arrangement and analytical array. What he sees at any moment is some real fact of consciousness or life or whatever. In every chapter of his books he has hold of some bit of experience, of fact, not manufactured, not spurious. Moreover, important fact. He goes deep. But he goes deep by an extremely narrow shaft. He does not remain at the moment clearly conscious of other facts, facts to the right and facts to the left, that should influence his conclusion. Only he dimly feels that what he sees is not all. He wants to survey the whole, but cannot. He feels the whole but can only see a small part; so he falls back on the idea that the part is darkly pregnant with the whole. The consequence is a peculiar helplessness. For example one is sure he would not be well able to defend his own doctrines in relentless debate. He has too little clear sense of his own bearings. He has too little clear sense of manifold relation. His eye does not take in at any one sweep the lie of the land and the several positions of the opposing forces. It does not take in at any one sweep his own philosophy. He is at times out of touch with his own base of operations. All this gradually forms in the reader a sense of the *difficulty* with which M. Bergson writes a book. It is, as has been said, carefully and most cautiously constructed. It never sweeps forward with a natural progress, an easy gait. Emphatically his writing has no *élan vital*.

4. He is not by nature a logician. It is the whole nature of logic to take in much at one sweeping glance. That is the sole purpose for which logic exists. Logic is able to say "either . . . or . . .," and the whole universe of possibilities is at once marshalled in two opposite ranks. Logic classifies, by considering *all* things that have a certain quality, including things yet unborn and undreamt of perhaps, if only they have that quality—things monstrous and inconceivable in all other respects perhaps,

if only they have that quality. At this one point logic has hold of them each and along the line of that resemblance runs out into the infinite. It is possible for the mind to put its eye down to one of those lines and look out along its endless course. In this he is not skilled.

M. Bergson, we saw, has delicacy of observation and delicacy of feeling. He has no intellectual delicacy. He has no sensitive avoidance of mental confusion and disorder. At some point, of course, where argument invites it, he may be logical for a brief space. But his mind soon escapes from the captivity of logic and makes its way back to the free and luxuriant forest of metaphor. The law of metaphor is that it exists for the sake of force and not for the sake of logical clearness. It may even in scientific exposition be everywhere present, but there it should be everywhere subordinate. In other words, the definitions and formulas which are the pivots upon which the whole turns should not be metaphor. But in M. Bergson's work they *are* metaphor. He seldom supplies a clear definition of anything. In this latest book "an immense current of consciousness" "traverses" matter "to draw it towards organization." Yet consciousness is not a current; consciousness does not traverse anything; consciousness does not draw anything, in a literal sense; it remains to be proved that it draws things in any sense whatever. And not seldom the formulas are metaphor that involves logical confusion. He has no intellectual or logical delicacy about language. Else he could not speak of prolonging a fact into a law, an ill phrase for those who take the trouble to remember what a fact is and what a law is. Else he could not speak of prolonging the past into the present, an ill phrase indeed for those who take the trouble to remember what past means and what present means. Such confusions are innumerable. Else he could not use the term "intuition" as he does. The word "intuition" has two meanings absolutely distinct. Both are based on metaphor, but there is less of metaphor in one than in the other. In Latin the term means, of course, "looking upon," "seeing." In philosophy it means an immediate acquaintance with concrete fact, an acquaintance with it because it is directly present. The other meaning, wholly different from this, appears when we say colloquially that a man knows something by intuition. We mean that he knows it not by the steps of the reasoning process but by a sudden leap to a conclusion which we believe to be a sure leap. The fact is here not present, but he divines it by a single act of the mind. Now it is hardly credible, but it is true, that this word, on which so much is made to rest, is used by him in both these senses undistinguished.

M. Bergson carries "interpenetration" really too far. He allows logically distinct ideas to fuse. The philosophy of interpenetration becomes the philosophy of fusion—of *con-fusion*. The fault vitiates his work through and through. We begin to understand his very qualified regard for the logical intellect. We begin to understand how in his craving for originality he can perpetrate such an essay as that on Brain and Thought in this volume, a tour de force of sophistical ingenuity.

Now what solid contribution to philosophy comes out of his work? He tells us that the intellect demands solids. Reasoning by metaphor is contagious. Can it be that he questions the jurisdiction of the intellect because he is not going to offer us anything solid?

Broadly speaking, his work (and this is true of the present volume) may be described as a reaction against mechanical explanation in matters of life, against causal

explanations in matters of human action, and against "intellect" in matters of conclusion and knowledge; in brief, a tilt against mechanism, a tilt against determinism, and a tilt against rationalism. The positive ideas which he possesses on these topics he carries even into the ideal of life and the conception of God.

Consider his assault on the mechanical view of the world. He assaults it with learning, with imagination, with the most accomplished ingenuity. But, rather oddly, the full import of his attack has seldom been discussed. This is because we do not consider the full nature of what he is attacking. The mechanical is the controllable. Man, beginning with primitive man, has more and more sought to find mechanics in the world in order that he might control the world, to sustain his life and to better it. And if the world proves mechanical in practice it is so far mechanical in reality. A machine is something that he has made to control for a particular purpose. He tries to find how he can control nature for his purposes. If nature is not machine-like or mechanical, just so far it is not controllable and cannot be made to serve the deliberate purposes of man. So far as the processes of life of the organism are not mechanical they are not governable and we cannot husband and manage our health, our energy, our life, the life of society. He who prefers to feel that the doings of life are in the hands of an incalculable vital principle has a thought very striking and perhaps very inspiring, but not applicable in any reliable manner. He has the spectacle of life, not an art of living. He admires life, but does not master it. He has a thrill in place of a satisfaction. Now this is thoroughly in the spirit of our day. Activity for its own sake is on all hands praised and celebrated. We tend to be, as a wise man has said, "bound nowhere under full sail." The author himself emphasizes that mechanical analysis is practical; so far then as he limits or excludes it, he is limiting or excluding practical control.

There are a great many arguments in books of philosophy that are plausible because they are long. If they were brought down to a few words they would not impress. M. Bergson's argument about the eye, to prove that it did not owe its origin to physical causes, is exactly of this character. It is impressive because he never commits it to a few words. Caligula or Nero is understood to have said that he wished all Rome had but one neck so that he might cut its head off. Some philosophers have a species of unconscious instinct that warns them against giving all their argument on a subject one neck, lest some ill-disposed critic might cut its head off,—nay, it must in justice be said, lest they might unexpectedly find it their duty to cut it off themselves. He assumes in his argument that a psychic force could by its steady urge produce eyes concurrently in independent lines or branches of animal life that did not affect one another at all. And he assumes that the physical factors of evolution, the physical necessities of animal life, could not have produced them. His argument rests thus on a negative proposition unproved and on a positive proposition not only unproved but so vague as to be incapable of proof.

What is the real import of his own theory of evolution? It means that if we could fully see the working of an animal body we should see particles of matter moved and shaped not by other particles of matter, but by an invisible force; moved and shaped without contact. M. Bergson was one of the group of French savants who sat as investigators of Madame Eusapia Palladino and were completely mystified or deceived by her. Now what he calls the "vital

current" irresistibly reminds one of what Eusapia used to call her current, her "corente," that "levitated" tables and left banjos and toy-pianos, after the light was raised, standing where they ought not. The analogy in the case is completed by the fact that there is a light in this case too, which M. Bergson insists upon having turned down at the beginning of the performance. That is of course the light of the understanding. Just as Palladino used to say that there was something inimical to her sensitive and bashful current in the nature of light, and that the light had to be got out of the way before the current would flow, so it is here. There is something inimical to M. Bergson's theory in the nature of the logical intellect.

This philosopher might well be apprehensive of reason. For what he is asking us to do is simply to abandon explanation. To explain a thing is to show that it had to be as it was. The only way of doing this is to find a law and to show that the event was a case of this law. We show, for instance, that A will always be followed by B. Here was an A, so B had to follow. B is thus explained. There is no other way of explaining. So explanation involves laws of sequence. It involves distinguishing. It involves distinguishing between A and B, and distinguishing in any confused heap of facts between A and the rest of the facts. To explain we always have to analyze. Science is an effort to explain, and all science is analysis. If we stop analyzing and begin to contemplate something as a whole, just to have the feeling of it, then we have turned away from science to aesthetic appreciation or personal appreciation or religious appreciation. It is in this realm that the mystical attitude of the soul has its place, the highest place. M. Bergson's philosophy has been called mystical. Exactly! That is, it is mystical philosophy. His philosophy is mysticism standing where it ought not. No real philosophy can be mystical. No real mysticism can be philosophy. Mysticism and philosophy are both justified, but we are not talking about the same thing when we talk about a philosophy and about mysticism. All that is striking, sublime, contagious, inspiriting, in M. Bergson's contemplations, and there is much, is justly and admirably so. But that part is not philosophy. Philosophy, like science, is all analysis. It is simply the profoundest of the sciences.

The truth is that our philosopher represents a relapse to the abortive science of the Middle Ages. That attempted science would explain the behavior of some physical substance, what we should now call its chemical properties, by its alchemic essence. It knew nothing about this alchemic essence except that it was, so to speak, the actuating temperament of the substance. It was like explaining a man's actions by saying: "That is a way he has." And so the physical activities of an animal body were explained by a vital principle, or, as it was sometimes called, a vegetative soul, that dwelt within the body and simply contained in itself the secret of all the body did and was.

Now modern chemistry, for example, goes about the task in a wholly new way. It says that the rich properties of a substance are a result of the combination of simpler elements. It explains by analysis. The mediaeval idea was that if a thing had remarkable properties there must be something inside it to give it those properties, an occult cause of its properties, something that had all the richness to itself and infused it into the visible matter. This occult cause appears to be merely the relic of the idea of a spirit or ghost. It was not called a spirit or ghost any longer, but it played something of the same part in the affair. It was an "énergie spirituelle" invoked for physical explanation.

Now the professed explanations of Creative Evolution and the other books are almost all of this nature. The fact is concealed by the admirably conscientious acquaintance of the author with scientific details and literature. He speaks the language of modern science with an excellent accent. He entrenches himself with the utmost caution behind the facts. But all the while he is just a learned, punctiliously equipped, overpoweringly impressive spokesman of folklore. He is employing the ideas of "sympathetic magic." This is the real secret of his immense vogue. And this is also, as was suggested at the outset, a chief reason why for a workman in philosophy it requires hard labor to understand him. His thought resists analysis. He is a representative of purely popular philosophy attired in fastidiously correct academic costume. We may give up explanation and adopt our author's theory, but we could never call his theory explanation. But indeed his is not a theory we could adopt, for it is not a coherent theory at all. It is an unsubstantial compound of metaphors.

There is a quaint philosophic tragedy in the fact that this relapse to mediaeval science should be seen in a philosopher who is a compatriot of Descartes and the first French philosopher of worldwide influence after him. For Descartes it was who made the best achievements of modern philosophy possible by drawing those very distinctions which M. Bergson is determined to blur. It was Descartes who clearly and decisively brought us out of mediaeval science and it is his most celebrated French successor who would lead us back. The conception that mind, by "running down," relapses into the form of matter, is of a singular crudity. It ought to be noted, however, that M. Bergson seems hardly French. The French genius is lucid. He has caught a certain superficial lucidity of style, but in essence his thoughts are,—well, "interpenetrating," confused.

It is true, of course, that mechanical analysis has not gone to the heart of things and never can, but it is humanly advisable to push it as far as it will possibly go. It represents our practical hold on the world. Spirit exists and materialism is discredited, but that does not supersede the mechanical analysis of the physical world. So also does the case stand in regard to determinism and free will. Our actual deterministic explanation of conduct does not go all the way and never will, but it represents our practical hold on conduct. It has been an error to suppose that so far as our acts of will are undetermined by causes they are free and responsible. It may conceivably be that indeterminism is in some slight degree true, but if so, in precisely that degree, we do not control our acts, we are not free and we are not responsible. Determinism stands for the element of control, the control of the character over actions. So far from being incompatible with freedom it is the only principle that is compatible with freedom. Determination by motives is merely the process, another name for which is free choice. M. Bergson's assault on determinism has a wholly harmful tendency. William James's assault on determinism had partly a wholesome tendency, for he was practical while M. Bergson is contemplative, and James's stress was really on a certain practical philosophy of life.

So it stands too with rationalism. Everybody thinks by instinct. Rationalism really means a belief in the wisdom of using a certain collection of tests and precautions called logic to make sure that our instinctive conclusions are trustworthy. There are no subjects in which these tests and precautions are not in some degree available. Throughout his long discussion of intellect our author offers no defini-

tion and gives evidence of no clear conception of what he means by intellect.

The tendency and bearing of this author's thought is best seen when we come to his conception of God. He identifies God with the "vital impetus," which though embedded in different organisms is, he maintains, all the while numerically one. He describes this one great vital impulse as "a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a display of fireworks." This centre, however, is not a person or thing, but a mere continuity of shooting out! "God is unceasing life, action, freedom." "God," thus conceived has no clear foreknowledge of His own purpose. The author expressly denies what he calls "finalism." "God" is, as it were, a continual struggle. A human organ is not designed, but the principle of life, pushing dimly in the direction of its needs, at last produces it. It is as if we thought of a near-sighted gentleman who is dimly aware of objects that concern him and without knowing just what they are or why he should look at them, by a vague, half-conscious impulse raises his eye-glass. Thus it is, according to our author, that animal life has raised the eye. Not only is deity conceived as struggle without foresight, but it is not defined with reference to the good. It unmakes as well as makes. It appears to have for the contemplative M. Bergson the very legitimate fascination of being intensely alive. The centre "from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a display of fireworks" is a picture congenial to the romantic temper. But Deity so conceived is not one with the good and offers no guidance to life.

What is the permanent importance of M. Bergson's work? On this question close examination can have in the end but one result. The only sound portions of any extent in his work are the first two chapters of his first book, *The Immediate Data of Consciousness*. They form certainly an admirable piece of work, though his thought there was less original than elsewhere. When we take up any one of the other portions of his work and examine it closely it collapses and seldom is anything but a little heap of dust left in the hand. As texts for philosophic study his volumes have permanent importance, for they are suggestive, they turn up most interesting questions, they have an important bearing upon our time. But as philosophy, that is, as an attempt to give us philosophic truth, they are not valuable. They are one more example of the unhappy waste of philosophic gifts due to the want of logical and critical education. It is not until the schools of philosophy make it their first business to supply this education, that splendid talent such as M. Bergson's will be protected against itself and enabled to give the world fruit of permanent value.

DICKINSON S. MILLER.

Howards End

Howards End, by E. M. Forster. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

FEW modern fictionists have revealed so robust a sense of the elusive and intangible as one finds in this novel of E. M. Forster's. And the main reason, one decides, is that the author of *Howards End* has realized the importance of relating even the most tentative conclusion about life as firmly as possible to the whole of life. Many adventurers into cryptic borderlands have seemed to detach themselves from other phases of thought and feeling as if unable to bear the touch of a too crass reality. But Forster stands four square to the "winds and odors of life," present-

ing a rich complex of characters and reactions from which to evolve the more delicate nuances of his theme.

"Only to connect!" says Margaret Wilcox, looking deep through the prosaic kindness and competence of her husband. Connect what? Why the gulls and the stars and the wych-elm and the tender cruelties of love itself with the garage, the motors, the nervous stupidity of Dolly and the middle-aged materialism of Henry Wilcox. To connect ricks of food and over-furnished dining-rooms with a hungry clerk who spends money for concrete and walks alone all night in the country. To see abyss and plains and mountain peaks clearly enough to recognize the common elements of all. This is of course an ancient task, ancient and possibly eternal, but in the story of *Howards End* it is essayed with rare insight and originality. Neither is it as serious as all this sounds. The book is entrancingly human with much of that deep-running humor that bubbles up from the heart of things.

The time is about ten years ago when Pan-Germanism and English Imperialism were being discussed discreetly, but in the same breath. The novel is a reprint, having been published at this earlier date and since then long out of print. An evidence of soundness is the fact that one reads it without any feeling of its having been bowled over by the war. The people are alive. The dialogue is apt and revealing. Margaret and Helen Schlegel are two wealthy and spirited young women living in London with their younger brother. With only Aunt Juley to visit them and remonstrate occasionally, the sisters lead an alert, independent existence, concerned a bit consciously over Art and Thought, but fearless and unusually clear-eyed.

"Some ladies do without hotels. Are you aware that Helen and I have walked alone over the Apennines with our luggage on our backs?"

"I wasn't aware, and, if I can manage it, you will never do such a thing again."

These two remarks suggest the respective mental attitudes of Margaret and her elderly husband. But if anyone could connect a Henry Wilcox with a subtler and more far-reaching world than he had known it would be such a person as Margaret Schlegel. In spite of her impetuosity she has a sustaining simplicity and patience. She is affectionately tolerant except when she denounces Henry in one splendid outburst at his hypocritical judgment of her sister. The same poise which has kept her indulgent of his blindness supports her condemnation and allows her to spare nothing of the bitter truth. The same intellectual steadiness enables her to pull together the broken threads of life at *Howards End*. In their helter-skelter eagerness she and Helen had reached a plane of the unseen which transcended the security of the whole Wilcox clan who with all their capability had never really learned to say "I."

Dramatic values are expertly managed. The breadth and casualness of the approach forms a specious background for the poignant climax which holds one to the last page.

R. H.

Contributors

LYTTON STRACHEY is the author of *Eminent Victorians*.

EDWARD G. LOWRY was formerly Managing Editor of the *New York Evening Post*. He served in the diplomatic and military service of the United States during the war.

ARTHUR GLEASON is a member of the Bureau of Industrial Research, New York City.