

Psychiatrists, To the Rescue!

Human Behavior In Relation to the Study of Educational, Social and Ethical Problems, by Stewart Paton, M. D. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$6.00.

DR. PATON'S is another of the books which are serving to shift the discussion of the mind and motives of man from the speculative and myth making psychologizing of the psycho-analysts to the hardly less inferential but certainly more verifiable analyses of the biologists and neurologists. This shift had been prefigured, but never undertaken, by Freud himself; it had been undertaken, and accomplished, with a beautiful and lucid economy, by Edwin Holt in his *Freudian Wish*; it had been explicit in Watson's *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*, and it had been advanced by the work of Kempf, Rivers and Tansley. However, neither Freud's animadversions nor Holt's achievement appear to have exercised any influence on the trend and elaboration of the "new" psychology, and the books of the other men, except Watson's, are as yet symptoms rather than influences. The psycho-analytic procedure was and remains, for layman and professional alike, too facile, too seductive, too rich in the gratifications and liberties of adventurous reverie, to face a rival in "bioneurology." The laborious minutiae of the latter, its complicated technique and forbidding terminology compose a handicap which it can have little chance to overcome.

Dr. Paton's book does not, unhappily, improve this chance. His thesis is simple enough, and within the limitations imposed by the subject-matter, is quite capable of clear and elegant statement, and interesting exposition. Dr. Paton has in his turn become passionate about the Socratic program: "Know thyself." He is eager that we should all be about it, and he thinks that if we can realize it in time, it will yet save us. But he does not apprehend this self that we are to know for our safety's sake, either in the manner of Socrates or in the manner of Freud. He apprehends it as a physiological arrangement of nerves and muscles engaged in maintaining an unstable equilibrium in an environment which is always upsetting this equilibrium. Its life consists in "processes of adaptation which have as their object the restoration of the physiological balance of the organism, its protection against injurious forces and the perpetuation of the species." The phenomena in which these processes express themselves are apperceived, not literally and empirically, as they appear, but in terms of a mechanistic materialism, mystically assumed, but no more applicable than any other metaphysical assumption. The body is regarded as a system of energies, whatever that may mean; the brain, as "the centre of a great system for the reception, coordination, transformation, and distribution of energy." In these operations upon energy, having for non-teleological object the preservation of the individual as a "physiological balance" and the "perpetuation of the species," certain mechanisms of adjustment are engaged, involving memory, plasticity, the nervous system, the unconscious, in a process of biological integration in which human life consists. Particularly engaged are the spinal cord and the brain, the "new brain" and the "old" and the system of glands with their internal secretions. In the latter reside the secrets of temperament and character; in the "new brain" the secret of intelligence. It constitutes a secondary system "with the prime function of facilitating full and free expression of the deep-seated instinc-

tive life." Nevertheless, in it consists "the superiority of man"; it displaces "necessary reactions by educable adaptations"; it is the basis of the personality, and it may often be in conflict with the lower levels of the nervous system.

Personality is "the functional expression of the higher brain centres," an "organismal" (sic) conception, compounded of intelligence and character, extrovert or introvert in type, united to the environment by its sense-impressions (which are as important as its instincts), and realizing its integration or balance as health, and its disintegration or repression by "a sense of inadequacy or insecurity" which it seeks to neutralize by cynicism, vanity and other excesses of character. Finally, personality is, we are told, not a state but a process. Of what, and how, is not said, nor is the process of personality described. On the contrary, we are introduced to mechanisms, structures, entities, and told that they operate, but neither the operation nor the manner of it is revealed, nor can be, yet. Descriptions are all of static things in static terms, as when the self or "psychological individual" is stated to be, (the italics are mine) "a mosaic of bodily feelings, impulses, tastes and all activities expressed in the life of man . . . a sum of memories, or engrams, habit reactions, and representations. . . ." So again, the development of this self from infancy is designated by its imputed conditions rather than by its intrinsic character; so are the formation of types of human temperament and character, the rise and operation of inhibitory processes, the establishment and activity of human dispositions, the formation of habits, of conflicts and dissociations. And, ultimately, all are phenomena of the storing, transformation and redistribution of energy.

This whole ignoratio is perpetrated, moreover, with an extraordinary redundancy and abstractness. The pages bristle with footnotes, and the impression grows on the reader that what they offer has not come as a result of direct observation and reflection but rather as the somewhat careless transcription of reading notes made from cards not too wisely arranged. Both style and form improve, although the content deteriorates, where Dr. Paton begins to express his own likes and dislikes, and moralizes about old age and women's rights, about mysticism and democracy, about colleges and culture, about rebellious artists and pacifists, about progress and revolution, about the German mind and the Russian Soviet Republic. The moralizing contains many items of smart observation and not unsound judgment as well as undisciplined prejudice. The upshot of it is that the world is sick and tired and needs to be reorganized according to the Newark plan, with plenty of jobs for the psychiatrist. Dr. Paton declares:

Today, although we are aware that there is little to choose between the psychopathic war lord and the equally obsessed, fickle, ambitious leader of the people, we show a strange indifference to the menace of all that both embody. A Soviet régime has glorified egotism, has accepted the Teutonic belief in one road only to salvation; and such clamorous professors of hate toward all forms of autocracy are now proclaiming the supreme right of labor and the common people. Neither autocrat nor Soviet is capable of making any sacrifice for a really disinterested ideal. Neither has recognized the vital principle of mental hygiene that 'civilization does not consist in knowing, but in the manner of acting.' Trotsky and Lenine have put forth a programme which, if carried into effect throughout the world, would make it impossible either to distinguish sanity from insanity or

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