

## NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

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A DEFENCE OF IDEALISM. By May Sinclair. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.

William James would have read with delight the attack upon his own favorite doctrines in Miss Sinclair's book. He would have loved the style of this critic who has adopted, and femininely improved upon, his own manner of stating an adversary's case more effectively than that adversary could state it for himself; who argues both *pro* and *contra*, not with her mind only, but with her whole soul. In her he would have found no "dry schoolmaster's temperament," no "hurdy gurdy monotony," but keenness, daring, tender-mindedness of the heroic stamp. He would have been tolerant toward her aversion to being classified as tender-minded, and he would perhaps have conceded that unless one runs over the metaphysical hot ploughshares with bare feet the performance is likely to be of little value. The gaiety of Miss Sinclair's performance, seeing that it is the real thing and not a stage trick, must have appealed to him. And Josiah Royce, too, would have been glad to meet in print one who so fully understands that philosophy is a "passionate interest." He would have welcomed this new ally into the Idealistic camp, though graciously differing from her.

The charm of the book must be felt, indeed, by every reader who has the smallest drop of philosophy in his nature, and this charm is not in the least inconsistent with rigorous logic. Miss Sinclair has perhaps written more entertainingly about philosophy than any one since Plato; she has triumphed in the most difficult domain of literary art. So readable is her treatise that one may be easily led to suppose that she is simply writing essays, or "just criticizing." She is doing nothing of the sort: she is criticizing with a big "C," and she needs only to number her paragraphs and mark them with the symbols that mean "section," to appear as methodical as Archbishop Whately or H. G. Wells.

She uses, in short, though one scarcely realizes the fact, the traditional, the inevitable method; that is, she takes up one by one and tears to pieces and condemns the doctrines incompatible with her own, and then, after making some concessions and alterations, holds up her own belief, for reinspection, as relatively unscathed and blameless. What distinguishes her book from works of the more technical sort is that in defending Unity against Plurality she is usually able not merely to involve her opponents in inconsistencies, but to arrive without undue delay at some clear and intelligible distinction—to show, for example, that, although Samuel Butler may play conjurer's tricks with

the current doctrines of memory and self, "all these dangers and dilemmas are avoided if we do but put self-hood where the plain man puts it, and where our everyday thinking puts it—first."

Butler's views have been thorns in the side of orthodox scientific philosophy; but Miss Sinclair, attacking from quite another direction than that along which the orthodox counter-attack upon Butler has to proceed, experiences no great difficulty in refuting as much of Butler's arguments as she cannot reconcile with her own opinions. This irreconcilable part of Butler is his doctrine of the self in its relation to heredity. Here the point that Miss Sinclair makes clear, if not compelling, is the thought that however great the superiority of unconscious and ancestral life over conscious and individual life may, according to Butler, appear to be, the psycho-analysts (strange helpers, these, for an idealist!) have shown that this same unconscious life, this racial memory, is, more than anything else, a chamber of horrors. It is just in proportion as one raises oneself above the old level, just in proportion as one *sublimates* desires instead of repressing them, that one attains to the real values of life. "It is when I fall short of my part, when I return on my path . . . or when I simply refuse to grow up and persist in being a child, and not a very enterprising or intelligent or original child at that; it is when, in four words, I resign my individuality, that I become inferior. And the word for it is Degeneration." The author persuades one at least not to "go back"! For "to be degenerate is to fail to add the priceless gift of individuality to the achievement of the race," and in extreme cases it results in lunacy.

Bergson is even easier for Miss Sinclair to deal with than is Butler. Bergson's philosophy is indeed a perfect playground for agile and elusive contradictions. All these contradictions, one feels, M. Bergson could eventually reconcile if he could ever catch them all. More important than the work of assisting M. Bergson in this occupation, is the perception of the essential fault, the *hypostasis* that underlies his whole system. This fault Miss Sinclair sees plainly enough. "In the interests of the *Élan Vital*, M. Bergson has ignored everything in consciousness that does not bear upon action; and in consequence of his wholesale rejections, his position is between the devil and the deep sea. The deep sea holds all the 'relations' that he has let 'filter through' . . . and the devil has run away with the possibilities of sensation and the 'intermediary perceptions' which have 'escaped' him."

Vitalism is a "popular" philosophy, and Miss Sinclair criticizes it with success. Pragmatism and Humanism are, or were, also popular in their method and "appeal," and upon these two, Miss Sinclair scores somewhat heavily. It is true that she scarcely begins to analyze the Pragmatic and Humanistic doctrine concerning truth, and that her criticism is chiefly concerned with the Pragmatic and Humanistic conception of God. Nevertheless, she delivers shrewd blows at a somewhat vulnerable spot; for not only does she point out inconsistencies in the Pragmatic and Humanistic scheme of things, but she reveals a secret and shameful craving for unity in the Pragmatic and Humanistic breast.

Miss Sinclair even carries her war into the camp of the Psycho-physical-parallelists and tilts not without success against the formidable Wundt.

But the New Realism is an enemy of a different breed, as the author herself with some trepidation confesses. The New Realism is not popular philosophy, but technical philosophy. It seeks with grim resolution and by exact methods to solve one of the traditional problems, the problem of knowledge. Hitherto Miss Sinclair has done rather better than her opponents; she has at least asserted and maintained superiority; she has convinced her readers that she and they see the truth in its simplicity as the party in opposition does not. But although she points out difficulties enough in Neo-Realism, she is not successful, as she has been in the previous cases, in cutting the ground from beneath her adversaries' feet or in soaring over the barriers which they erect. Neo-Realism is not destroyed or surrounded; it is merely somewhat damaged. And the author ends by appropriating from it what seems its most questionable feature—its doctrine of universals.

Whether the chapter on mysticism, which the author has introduced, really belongs in a book of serious philosophy is a doubtful but not very important question. Certainly Miss Sinclair has made the subject interesting and she offers at least one new and valuable suggestion. It appears to be true, she says in effect, that in mystical experience the *psyche* usually obeys the tendency to travel backwards to the prehuman state of mind, or at any rate to the early-human, instinctive, fearful, and nightmarish condition; but then it *may* move forward toward the future—a thought the implications of which are exciting if not wholly philosophical.

Many readers of this treatise of Miss Sinclair's will become devotees of philosophy if they are not so to begin with, and all will look forward to the appearance of the author's forthcoming book, *The Way of Sublimation*, in the reasonable expectation that it will prove a moral and mental stimulus of the most effective and beneficent sort.

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THE PHILIPPINES, TO THE END OF COMMISSION GOVERNMENT, and THE PHILIPPINES, TO THE END OF THE MILITARY RÉGIME. By Charles B. Elliott. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1917.

Americans desiring general information in regard to the Philippines may consult a great variety of fairly reliable and well-written works. There are available in English no fewer than twenty rather popular accounts of these islands. This number includes four books by D. C. Worcester and one, *The Philippine Problem*, by Frederick Chamberlin; it does not include books dealing with special phases of the Philippine question, reports such as that of Charles T. Magoon upon the legal status of the islands acquired by the United States in the war with Spain, nor books dealing with larger matters of foreign policy to which the Philippine problem is germane, such as C. A. Conant's *The United States in the Orient* or Coolidge's *The United States as a World Power*. Nor are important autobiographies like those of Admiral Dewey and Theodore Roosevelt, both of which contain matter