

Ideas and Studies. *Publishers' lists this year have been bulging with books on psychology, psychiatry, and self-help. From popular guides such as "What Life Should Mean to You," by Alfred Adler, to technical studies like Harry Stack Sullivan's "Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry," most of these books are designed to satisfy the needs of a disturbed post-war generation. We review below a useful and typical example of a more popular book of this type. . . . From the study of personality, the study of self, to sociology, the study of groups, is a short step. But this year has yielded few books in this vital field. We are glad therefore to present a review of Howard W. Odum's useful one-volume study of sociology, "Understanding Society." We recommend a comparison with Sorokin's very different survey in the same field, "Society, Culture, and Personality."*

Sociology Synthesized

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY: *The Principles of Dynamic Sociology.* By Howard W. Odum. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1947. 749 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

OCCASIONALLY an individual transcends his functions. His person, his task, and his place become somehow fused until at last he becomes an institution. This is true of Howard Odum. For more than a quarter century he has served as symbol for sociology at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he is a university professor. In all the Southern states, where he has so tenaciously labored on behalf of improved relations between Negro and white citizens he prefigures the new intellectual who, with science in one hand and humane hope in the other, gives promise of a new Southern culture.

Howard Odum is a regional man. His life and thought and work are identified with a particular area and its people. In North Carolina, the Tar-Heel State, it would probably be said of him, "He sure has tar on his heels." He administers one of the most active sociology departments in the nation, operates a farm, and writes Negro folk tales with genuine feeling and insight.

This book (and he has written many, including last spring's "The Way of the South") is a text written in language which approaches the colloquial. He has not attempted what so many professors vainly strive for, namely, a book which is presumed to meet the requirements of both the scholar and the so-called general reader. "Understanding Society" is candidly a text book in the best American manner, furnished with assignments, readings, and workshop exercises. He has written not in a

retrospective mood but rather with futuristic urgency.

The voice of the people [he asserts] seems to echo the verdict of their leaders that unless we can provide a science of human relations to match the science and technology of the material world, society is faced with disaster or even destruction.

In this current volume he has built into a single structure a synthesis of his life's work as a theoretical and practical sociologist. His appeal is to students who will be the future practitioners of the new science of human relations.

Odum's concept of society is not some vague and mystical entity for which an abstruse definition is required. He speaks of specific societies, plural groupings of human beings who may be delegates to the United Nations or inhabitants of a rural village; citizens of New York or tenant farmers of his own South; residents of Back Bay or a Negro folk community; Harvard University or Mexican Indians; Western Civilization or the frontier society of the United States: These are all societies, associations within which the complex and subtle features of human relations are made manifest.

How are these multifarious groupings of mankind, these variable so-

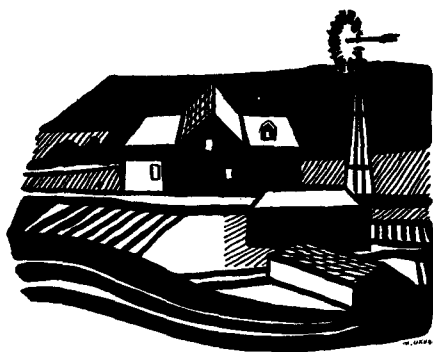
cieties, to be studied? What light is sociology capable of shedding upon these intricate interrelations which are so fateful for human survival and happiness? Odum's answer is clear and methodical. He insists that societies may be understood and hence lend themselves to more rational control if inquiries are conducted which will reveal their relation to nature, to habitat; their cultural products; their civilizations or means of adaptation to environment through the use of science and technology; the people who compose them, and finally the problems and difficulties which they precipitate for themselves and others. For these purposes we stand in need of certain instruments ranging from social hypotheses to social research and demonstration. If these implements are properly utilized, we shall at last be capable of announcing and applying "the principles of dynamic sociology," a phrase which he uses as his subtitle.

Happily, Professor Odum does not leave the reader with this proposition unsupported. The bulk of his text is devoted to concrete illustrations showing how such understanding is to be acquired. In presenting his outline for the study of society he appears to anticipate a reanimation of the social sciences, since he believes that "now perhaps for the first time, there is approximate unanimity among all scientists that the science of human relations must have new precedence." I wish I might share this belief, but when I recall that last year when a national research foundation subsidized by the Federal Government was proposed and the social sciences were wilfully omitted, my optimism falls to a lower plane.

Sociologists are in the habit of inventing new and often awkward words. Professor Odum is not exempt. His contribution to the amazing lingo of sociology is the word "technicways," which are

habits of the individual and the customs of the group arising specifically as to time and occasion to meet the survival needs of a modern technological world. . . . Folkways are customs and habits which grow up naturally to meet needs, and they ripen through sanction and time into mores. Not so the technicways, which arise from the pressure of technological procedures and force individual and group to conform to their patterns, regardless of empirical considerations or of mass sanction.

In other words, whenever our adjustments are responses to technology we acquire technicways. Thus modern fashions, in so far as these are induced by the technique of advertising, belong to technicways. Likewise, movie-going, birth control, and decentrali-





"General Store and Post Office," by Doris Lee.

—From "Art in Federal Buildings."

zation of industry in response to the atomic bomb are all examples of technicways which represent ways of behavior which contradict the folkways. As technology increases in scope the technicways supplant other means of social change, with the obvious consequence that cultural lag is widened and deepened.

"Understanding Society" is especially helpful by reason of its inclusion of the regional concept. It must have become clear to most thoughtful persons that natural regions, and especially river valleys, constitute feasible units for social and economic planning. Professor Odum provides admirable reasons for this conviction, and this was to be expected since he is perhaps the foremost of our regional sociologists. His enthusiasm in this connection is, indeed, contagious, as for example when he insists that "the region provides the perfect laboratory for social research and planning. To this end, the regional approach affords the best opportunity for the cooperation and coordination of all the social and natural sciences attacking a problem." I wish he had considered social planning as one of his major categories and had then combined these two notions, since it is apparent that social scientists in the United States have been singularly unproductive in furnishing good teaching material in this sphere. It seems to me logical to include in contemporary sociology a sequence which begins with technology as the great disturber, which inevitably destroys all natural or automatic controls and therefore makes planning an imperative (Odum's technicways), and ends with a rational orientation for planning under a democracy.

But I am already beginning to edit rather than review Professor Odum's book and this is not my proper role. "Understanding Society" is a com-

prehensive and inclusive text and from my viewpoint exhibits but one important weakness: its treatment of social theory falls considerably below the standard set by other sections. Social theory seems to be almost an appendage to the book as a whole and is accorded hurried and synoptic treatment. This seems to me unfortunate because it is my belief that social scientists who are not also sound theorists will never be capable of formulating or utilizing workable principles for a dynamic sociology. In fact, they will not even be able to produce relevant units of research. A chemist or a physicist may be able to operate successfully without philosophical accompaniments, but when a social scientist attempts to do so his work loses its dynamic content. In order to become effective the social sciences must serve as a bridge between the physical and biological sciences on the one hand and the humanities on the other, and I include philosophy as a humanistic study. And now I know it is time to bring this review to an abrupt end because I have begun to use Professor Odum's book as a step from which to mount my hobbyhorse. I cannot, however, leave Professor Odum without one last friendly word. In the eighteenth century in the city of Brussels there stood a printshop managed by one Jean Léonard. He had chosen as his motto, a custom of the time, these words: *Studio et Labore*. This motto suits Howard Odum. Through study and application and labor he has made for himself a revered place in the region where he has chosen to live and work, and in this manner he has become a national figure.

Eduard C. Lindeman is a professor of social philosophy at the New York School of Social Work, Columbia University.

Man's Basic Needs

PSYCHOLOGY IN LIVING. By Wendell White. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1947. 393 pp. \$2.95.

Reviewed by RAYMOND G. FULLER

HERE is another book of the popular, practical type dealing with everyday psychology—the psychology, in the present case, of living effectively and satisfactorily with people, including oneself. It is a cross between a treatise and a "how to" book. The marriage, based on the principle that scientific knowledge of behavior is useful in living a life, seems to this examiner of the product to have been eugenically successful.

In physical makeup, too, this is really two books in one. The first part is called "Psychology in Human Relationships" and the second, "Psychology in the Achievement of Mental Health." But the underlying theme of both divisions of the subject matter is the fulfilment of man's basic needs, which are listed as follows:

- (a) A sense of personal worth—the deep-seated desire to feel that we amount to something among our fellows; (b) an interesting life—experiences varied and usually pleasing in substance and in general pattern; (c) love—a composite of sexual and other needs; (d) activity—sensory and motor experiences, especially in childhood, and the pursuit of something thought worth while; (e) physical well-being; (f) a livelihood; (g) a sense of security.

Such values of living have social and ethical implications. The book is intended to be helpful to Number One, but not at the expense of the other fellow. The other fellow has the same need to be treated as you