VII—CRITICAL NOTICES

An Introduction to Social Psychology. By WILLIAM McDougall, M.A., M.B., Late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy in the University of Oxford. London, Methuen, 1908. Pp. 351.

THE purpose of this very interesting book cannot be better described than in its concluding sentence, in which the author expresses the hope that enough has been said "to convince the reader that the life of societies is not merely the sum of the activities of individuals moved by enlightened self-interest, or by intelligent desire for pleasure and aversion from pain; and to show him that the springs of all the complex activities that make up the life of societies must be sought in the instincts and in the other primary tendencies that are common to all men and are deeply rooted in the remote ancestry of the race".

As regards the former or critical purpose of the book, there can be no doubt that the author is right in rejecting the view that human beings always act in accordance with the principle of self-interest—or indeed any other intellectual principle. The view, indeed, is moribund, if not dead. But, during the dominance of the Utilitarian school, it met with ready acceptance; it lies at the basis of the political doctrine elaborated by that school; and it may be traced in some of the political and economic maxims still commonly admitted. For this reason it was worth the author's while to take account of it, not so much for the purpose of refutation—for which the time is past—as for the sake of understanding. But his attitude to it is too exclusively negative. It is quite true, as he says, that the fundamental problem for the psychologist is not to explain men's occasional lapses from reasonable action, but rather the question, "How can we account for the fact that men so moved [by inherited impulses] ever come to act as they ought, or morally and reasonably?" But he treats the converse problem with unnecessary scorn. I do not think that Mr. McDougall would deny the existence of mental states in which consciousness of a principle regulative of conduct accompanies voluntary action in a direction opposed to the principle; nor am I sure that, formulating the matter thus, he would think the analysis of such a mental state wasted labour; and it was the analysis of a state of this kind that occupied the attention of the writers who—from Aristotle

to Sidgwick—have discussed “unreasonable action”. Genetic psychology gives the principle of explanation in showing the gradual process by which impulses have been organised rationally in conduct, and the incompleteness with which this rationalisation has been effected; but the exact nature of the disharmony that exists has to be brought out by analysis; and this analysis is not correctly described as an attempt “to prove that ‘unreasonable action’ . . . is actually achieved occasionally” (p. 9).

The criticism of “intellectualism” occupies, however, a very small part of Mr. McDougall’s volume, and may be regarded as simply a defence of the view that mind is fundamentally active. On its constructive side the doctrine of the book is based upon a theory of instinct and emotion which seems to me both original and important. A number of controversies attach inevitably to the exposition, concerning, for example, the definition of instinct, the extent of its influence in human life, the claim of certain processes to be regarded as instinctive, the distinction of primary from derivative emotions, and so on. I shall attempt to give an account of Mr. McDougall’s own view, without unnecessary reference to these controversies.

Instinct is defined as “an inherited or innate psycho-physical disposition which determines its possessor to perceive, and to pay attention to, objects of a certain class, to experience an emotional excitement of a particular quality upon perceiving such an object, and to act in regard to it in a particular manner, or, at least, to experience an impulse to such action” (p. 29). This definition has one point in common with all other views of the subject, namely, that instinct is “inherited or innate”. It differs from current views in not limiting instinct to the reactive impulse, but identifying it with a complete mental process which comprises perceptive, affective and conative factors. Instinct is referred to a “psycho-physical disposition”; and no objection need be raised to this term (now so common) if it be borne in mind that the term explains nothing, and is very much on the level of the term “faculty” once in favour with the descriptive psychologists. Perhaps it is meant to cover the characteristic, formerly implied by the term “faculty,” that each instinct is “a relatively independent functional unit in the constitution of the mind” (p. 49).

According to the definition, emotion is simply a factor in instinct. Each principal instinct, it is said, conditions some one kind of emotional excitement whose quality is specific or peculiar to it. These emotions, each of which is the affective aspect of a principal instinct, are the “primary emotions” (p. 47). The primary emotions and simple instinctive impulses are distinguished from the derivative or complex by two tests: they are clearly displayed in the instinctive activities of the higher animals; and they appear occasionally with morbidly exaggerated intensity.

Mr. McDougall gives a list of seven principal instincts; but the

omission of hunger (*cf.* p. 29) from among them makes it doubtful whether the list can be taken as exhaustive (in spite of the statement on p. 88). The dependence of hunger upon a temporary but recurrent bodily condition does not exclude it from the scope of his definition. In each of the instincts we must, in accordance with the definition, distinguish the reactive or impulsive tendency, the emotion and the excitant. It is worth while to set these down in tabular form. Two explanations, however, should be made first. In the first place, the author commonly gives to the instinct the name of its reactive or impulsive factor, thus to some extent (I think) obscuring the doctrine already enforced by him that the emotion is not an accompaniment of the instinct, but one factor in it. In the second place, the excitant named in the table is that which the author seems to regard as the simplest and primary circumstance to which the activity of the instinct is due, and not necessarily its ordinary excitant in mature consciousness.

Impulse.	Primary Emotion.	Excitant or Afferent Inlet.
Flight (and subsequent concealment).	Fear.	Sudden loud noise; the unfamiliar as such.
Repulsion.	Disgust.	Bad tastes or smells; contact with slimy or slippery substances.
Curiosity.	Wonder.	The unfamiliar (a larger degree of which excites fear).
Pugnacity.	Anger.	Obstruction to any instinctive activity.
Self-assertion (or self-display).	Elation (positive self-feeling).	Presence of spectators to whom one feels oneself in any way superior.
Self-abasement (or subjection).	Subjection (negative self-feeling).	
Parental instinct (protective impulse).	Tender emotion.	A child's expression of distress.

In addition to these there are the reproductive, gregarious, acquisitive and constructive instincts, which, in spite of their great importance for social life, "play but a minor part in the genesis of the emotions" (p. 82).

This scheme involves a theory of emotion. Emotion is not a complete psychosis, but simply the affective aspect of an instinct. I could have wished that somewhat more detailed explanation had been given of this affective aspect. One thing, indeed, is clear from the author's exposition: emotion is not to be identified either with its motor expression or with pleasure-pain; "pleasure and pain are not in themselves springs of action, but at the most of undirected movements" (p. 43). Perhaps the emotion may be described as a kind of subjective excitement which tends to be accompanied by,

but is not identical with, pleasure-pain ; and this excitement is of several quite distinct kinds — fear, disgust, wonder, anger, etc. These must be regarded as ultimate facts of mind, just as much as, for example, the sensations, red, blue, yellow, are. They can't be explained to any one who has not experienced them. So far the theory of emotion agrees with that worked out by the late David Irons, in his *Psychology of Ethics* (1903). Its distinguishing characteristic consists in the assertion that each emotion depends on a special excitant and impulse which, together with it, make up a complete "psycho-physical disposition" called an instinct. The instincts appear fully organised in the human being ; but their biological utility suggests that their organisation in just this form was favoured by natural selection acting upon the pre-human ancestors of man. And to ask why anger should be of this quality and fear of that is a question as unanswerable as why red is red and blue blue.

Looking at the details of the above list, the first thing that strikes one is that sympathy, imitation, etc., are not classed as instincts, and that joy and sorrow are not among the emotions. This leads to some further account of Mr. McDougall's views.

Sympathy, Imitation and Suggestion (it is held) are not instincts, because in an instinct the excitement of the innate disposition "determines an affective state or emotion of a specific quality and a native impulse towards some specific end" (p. 90). The three tendencies named have not this characteristic. In Sympathy any one of a number of different emotions may be induced in the observer (or subject), and in each case the appropriate impulse is excited : there is no single type of emotion or of reaction peculiar to sympathy. There is the same variety, both emotional and active, in Imitation. Suggestion, also, is without the specific character which, in the author's view, marks the instinct. Along with these the Tendency to Play is described, and it also is classed as an innate general tendency or "pseudo-instinct". That instinctive tendencies are to be found in the operation of all these pseudo-instincts is admitted, most of them he succeeds in identifying with the instincts already recognised. In one case, however (p. 106), he has to postulate an additional "extremely simple rudimentary instinct" to make his theory work. A still more difficult hypothesis is involved in his explanation of the play-tendency. After an interesting discussion of Groos's theory he comes to the conclusion that something more than preparation for mature life is involved in the playful fighting of young animals and in the games of boys. "The movements," he says, "with their characteristic differences from those of actual combat, must be regarded as instinctive, but as due to the excitement of some modified form of the combative instinct, an instinct differentiated from, and having an independent existence alongside, the original instinct" (p. 112). The impulse is to "get the better of," not to destroy, the opponent ; the emotion

involved is clearly not anger, but no positive account of it is given. The probability of such an instinct being developed in animals is defended on the ground of its educational value—"to secure practice in the movements of combat" (p. 114). The speculation is ingenious; but one would like to know whether there are any other instances of one instinct giving birth to another instinct to be its daughter and handmaid.

The instincts as they operate in the higher animals, but more particularly in man, are, of course, modified by experience. Four principal causes of modification are distinguished: (1) The innate disposition comes to be excited by other perceptions or ideas than its primary excitants; (2) its expression is modified and complicated; (3) instinctive processes blend, and (4) "the instinctive tendencies become more or less systematically organised about certain objects or ideas" (p. 32). By means of these processes, especially the last, the nature of the Complex Emotions and of the Sentiments is explained. In his analysis of these the author adopts and utilises the view of Sentiment as "an organised system of emotional tendencies centred about some object," which was first set forth by Mr. Shand in *MIND* (N.S., vol. v.). The succeeding chapters of the first section of the book contain a detailed analysis of the Sentiments and Complex Emotions. The second and concluding section consists of a series of chapters on the ways in which social life has been shaped by the operation of the primary instincts and other innate tendencies. All these chapters contain much interesting and important matter. Considerations of space, however, forbid any discussion of their detail; and I must content myself with a few remarks on one or two leading points in the general character of the doctrine set forth.

Mental dispositions are either innate or acquired. The innate consist of the instincts, which are tendencies to attend, to feel, and to react in specific ways, and of certain general tendencies to imitate the movements of another, to receive his ideas by suggestion, and to share his emotion by sympathetic induction. These latter (all included by M. Tarde under the term "imitation") are non-specific, that is, are indifferent to the special kind of mental content to which they lead. Along with them may be placed (not habits but) habit. These specific and non-specific tendencies form the inheritance of each individual mind. All else is acquired by individual experience working upon them. The consciousness of self, the complex emotions, moral and intellectual ideas are thus empirical products which need to be built up afresh for each man. But their social character is assured because the instincts on which they are based have been "selected" owing to their being serviceable to the race, and because the imitative tendency leads each man to fashion himself after a social pattern, while habit preserves the connexions of ideas and impulses once made. The all-sufficiency of instinct is asserted in the following passage:—

"Directly or indirectly the instincts are the prime movers of all human activity; by the cognitive or impulsive force of some instinct (or of some habit derived from an instinct), every train of thought, however cold and passionless it may seem, is borne along towards its end, and every bodily activity is initiated and sustained. The instinctive impulses determine the ends of all activities and supply the driving power by which all mental activities are sustained; and all the complex intellectual apparatus of the most highly developed mind is but a means towards these ends, is but the instrument by which these impulses seek their satisfactions, while pleasure and pain do but serve to guide them in their choice of the means" (p. 44).

This passage fairly represents the doctrine of the book. But I think it shows too great a rebound from the "intellectualism" which it opposes, and I am convinced that it goes a great deal farther than the facts justify us in going. It is admitted, of course, that the greatest perfection of instinct is exhibited by animals very low in the biological scale. When instinct is modified by the capacity for learning by experience and by intellectual processes a higher stage of development has been reached. This also is matter of agreement. But the assertion that, even in the highest life, instinct always determines the ends, and all that thought does is to modify or devise means towards these ends; is supported by no proof which I can discover. Indeed, the whole trend of the discussion brings out the profound modifications which human ends, as well as the means towards them, undergo through intellectual processes. Mr. McDougall, however, seems to me unduly to minimise the work of intellect, and to speak of it as a mere mechanical instrument, used by man but hardly of the essence of his life. I do not suggest that thought fashions ends of conduct *in vacuo*, or out of "bloodless categories"; but in the human mind the instinctive end becomes the object of reflexion, and suffers modification in the process.

Further, if I have correctly grasped the general position of the book and its implications, it would seem that not merely the moral consciousness, with its principle of valuation, but also the intellectual categories, such as causality or the axiom of non-contradiction, must, like other mental products, be developments from instinct. But this question is not discussed.

With regard to the moral consciousness, however, Mr. McDougall is explicit. His discussion is also valuable and suggestive, though too complicated to admit of easy summary. The chief points seem to be the following: The importance of tribal custom in moral development is admitted, but regarded as secondary; its judgments are "imitative," whereas the original moral judgments "proceed directly from emotions" (p. 216). There is, however, no specific moral emotion or moral sentiment. Nor is sympathy fundamental, although it, as well as the self-feelings, enter into the composition

of the various emotions from which judgments of approval or disapproval proceed. If we ask for the most important and primary source of morality we must go to the instincts. "All altruistic conduct has its root and origin in the maternal instinct" (p. 204). In particular, we must look to the intimate alliance that exists between tender emotion and anger: "the anger evoked in this way is the germ of all moral indignation, and on moral indignation justice and the greater part of public law are in the main founded" (p. 73). This is Dr. Westermarck's theory with an element of precision added to it; the moral indignation is due to anger excited in connexion with the tender emotion. That the obstruction of any instinct produces pugnacity or anger, we have already learned; but in this case the anger is produced not by an obstruction of the tender emotion, but by the cause which gives it an opportunity for exercise. Thus the instinct is modified in a very marked way. It is easy, no doubt, to invent explanations of this as well as the other difficulties connected with the hypothesis; but it is also hard to verify these explanations. I imagine that the advantage which the hypothesis has over Dr. Westermarck's less specialised view is that the connexion with tender emotion gives to the indignation excited a certain "moral" flavour. It must be remembered, however, that the altruism of the maternal instinct is of a very exclusive kind, and that no reason has been given for denying that the anger excited by a blow or a theft is also a "germ of moral indignation".

Moral indignation, however, is not put forward as the sole origin of morality. At the most it could account only for judgments of disapproval and not for judgments of approval. It is characteristic of Mr. McDougall's ingenious but candid analysis, that morality arises from a number of diverse sources (*cf.* p. 218) which may well lead, and do lead, to conflicting moral judgments, and that, in showing how an ideal of conduct may be acquired, his theory does not enable him to give a reason for holding one ideal to be better than another.

Criticism of this and of other points could hardly be made adequate within the limits of a review; and I must content myself with recommending the book both for its suggestiveness and for the ingenious way in which a few simple principles are made to yield a complete account of mental life.

W. R. SORLEY.

Anti-Pragmatisme, Examen des droits respectifs de l'aristocratie intellectuelle et de la démocratie sociale. Par ALBERT SCHINZ, Professeur à l'Université de Bryn Mawr. Paris, Alcan, 1909. Pp. 309..

M. SCHINZ's book is a document of great interest as a genuine piece of psychological self-revelation, a spontaneous reaction of a philosophic soul upon a new idea, too new and too big to be em-