Book Reviews

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. By George Malcolm Stratton. George Allen and Company, London.

Where is the feast of fat things we expect from the opening of this book? Why has the abundance of vital material gathered from the world's religions shriveled to dry bones in the author's hands? Ever and again he seems to strike some hidden living well of explanation with a rod of discernment only to pass on and leave it to be choked by the desert sand of barren description.

He suggests the many sidedness of human nature and hints at desire as the motive force; he touches the question of ambivalence of feeling and expression; he traces in part the evolutionary construction of religion out of human nature and experience. But as he touches these things he as quickly turns away as if indeed there were no way into "the obscurity in which all the deeper facts of consciousness are veiled."

Or is it that he dares not penetrate this obscurity? We suspect that though he attempts to include the multitude of causes which enter religious history and to accord value to each diverse element, his own personal inclination finds its security and therefore its ideal in the "sanction of the Best," that the fixity and permanency of contemplative or intellectualistic aspects of religion best fulfil his desire. Thus all his attempt at psychological understanding is frustrated and he really misses the causative *élan vital*, the dynamic energy which informs and vitalizes religious history in its development as in its manifold expression of energized desire. His historical perspective shifts also at times and thus fails, as if he were trying to bring back facts which are products and make of them determining causes. There is manifest in all this, as also in the discussions of the place of thought in religious psychology, the want of the illuminating distinction between the intellectual static product of thought and the vital but fleeting intuition. Into the latter the author partially enters, but it escapes him and he has missed the deeper reality.

The last chapters come again, like the introduction, nearer to this and reach more fully into the profound sources of the true psychology of religion manifest in its varied sublimated processes of attainment.

JELLIFFE.

MATTER AND MEMORY. By Henri Bergson. Authorized Translation by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. George Allen and Company, London; The Macmillan Company, New York.

A special privilege is sometimes granted the reviewer to disregard the demands of current literature and turn back to a work that is not recent. The intrinsic reality of Bergson's writings accord this privilege. Nor is this a reality in the sense of a crystallized form of truth once caught and held, expressed for all time. Bergson's consummate mastery lies in something the reverse of this, in the power with which he brings us into the reality which is ceaselessly becoming, where we also take our part as creators of the new and yet the real.

Matter and memory precedes his later fuller development of the basic principles of his philosophy, his theory worked out in "Creative Evolution."

Here in the earlier work he discovers and defines matter as we practically deal with it and consider it through our perception in conjunction, however, with the spirit, which we grasp in tangible form in memory.

Idealism has reduced matter to a phantom, a mysterious entity, by regarding its qualities as merely subjective appearances. Materialism, on the other hand, finds the origin of consciousness simply in the "interplay of material elements" out of which sensible qualities along with the phenomena of memory arise merely from the activity of brain processes. Both systems fail to establish a relationship between the reality which science finds extended in space and an unextended consciousness. They fail to explain the opposition which seems to exist between quality and quantity, the heterogeneity which seems to belong to our consciousness and the homogeneity of the universe extended before us. The question of freedom and necessity form their third stumbling block.

The fundamental reason for the failure of materialism and idealism before these apparently insurmountable obstacles lies in the speculative attitude which is taken toward the whole matter. Bergson's starting point, on the contrary, is essentially practical and pragmatic. It is that of action, and it admits of a middle course which is able to avoid the rocks which wreck the other systems, and thus to discover an adequate explanation of the interaction of matter and spirit, while yet preserving clearly their distinctness in nature and in function.

Perception, Bergson says, does not exist in consciousness; it lies rather in matter itself. His painstaking exposition of the theory of "pure perception" elucidates this. Matter is revealed in an infinite succession of images among which stands one privileged image, that of the human body, whose special prerogative is action upon the other images. The human body is not capable of seizing this succession of images in its entirety nor of comprehending a complete image. Its purpose is rather to bring into outline just so much of an image, just those facets by which is revealed its contact with other images, which serve a useful purpose. This central image, the body, is the source of the perplexing question which realism and idealism fail to answer: How to explain the relation of the system of images in which each image varies in itself and submits to the action of other images surrounding it only in well-defined measure, and that in which all other images change in form and measure according to the action of the one privileged image, the body?

The body projects itself into other images by an element peculiar to itself, which arises from its capability of acting upon itself also and thereby introducing an affectivity, that is, something of itself, into perception. Pure perception, therefore, can exist only as a theoretical starting point. Already the subjectivity involved in sensations, or this affectivity, appears as the impurity introduced into perception. Another element has to be admitted which gives to perception its duration, to the intuition of an actual moment that of other moments. This is memory.

Here we enter the domain of spirit. Perception presents virtual courses of action sketched out before it, action which concerns other objects, which gives place to real action as the distance decreases between the external objects and our body. The actual intuition, however, due to present perception, is immeasurably enriched by recollection. The difficulty of separating pure perception and pure memory are responsible for the confusion in psychology and in metaphysics in regard to their distinction, which is that of kind rather than of degree. Through perception we put ourselves into the heart of things. Through memory we bring from the past whatever of former experience can insert itself into the present action in useful form. The body with its nervous system is the organ of this action, the pivotal point always insert-

ing itself into the present in order to create through its action the new moment ceaselessly becoming. Memory may consist in a form which is ready to respond to a present stimulus by the setting in motion automatically of an adapted motor mechanism. Or it is preserved in independent recollections, from which the subject chooses certain ones to insert into present action. Bergson utilizes a diagram which graphically represents the varying degrees of tension in which these memories exist, an immeasurable gradation of planes between the extreme extension in the past of memory images existing only in themselves, discrete, the extended phantasy world of the dreamer, and the pointed end of a cone formed by these planes in which useful memories are concentrated to be inserted into the moment of action.

The homogeneous extension of matter in this theory of matter and memory is no more than a useful term for the sake of discussion. The apparent incompatibility of this extension in space and the non-extension of memory which endures in time melts away before the theory of action. Matter, too, partakes of duration. Its duration is entered by memory through the tension with which it is possible to contract memory into the intuitive point. Homogeneous space becomes then only a convenient imaginary network thrown beneath reality to bring into relief the images practically carved out of matter. The opposition between quality and quantity also dissolves if we accept the idea of tension, difference in rhythm of duration. Thus again the necessity which must practically be admitted in the duration of matter becomes modified by the freedom which the spirit bestows upon it. For consciousness retains the past always better and better able to organize it with the present, and, moreover, with growing intensity of contraction its creative capacity is increased in acts of inner indetermination.

The whole force of the exposition of matter and memory and their interrelation, in other words of the relation of matter and spirit, lies in the theory of action. The particular image, the body, with its highly developed nervous system, is merely the instrument of both conscious and unconscious activity, the mind, or as Bergson chooses to call it, the spirit. This theory is essentially pragmatic both in the clearness of its explanations and in its practical efficacy as an aid to the understanding of psychological and psychopathological data, as well, moreover, as a guide and stimulus in individual action.

JELLIFFE.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELAXATION. By George Thomas White Patrick, Ph.D.
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1916.

It is indeed the question of repression with which the chapters of this book have to do. Psychoanalysis has appreciated its fundamental importance as the disturbing factor in individual life, because it is too frequently unsuccessful. Patrick brings to our attention in a more general picture the attempt of various forms of relaxation to escape the repression which increasingly higher mental and cultural development lays upon the individual.

Relaxation with this significance may rightly include such topics as he has brought together. They all represent the effort of the racially older reaction, which requires less stress and less restraint, to come to the front and provide a more reflex and therefore relaxing discharge of energy. Play, then, is an expression in children of the only level of activity for which they are yet capable, and in adults of the need to return temporarily to this earlier level. Laughter illustrates in the objects which arouse it the appeal of the earlier more primitive with its freer psychic and physiological discharge. Profanity performs the same service, since genetically it doubtless reaches back into the earliest vocal form of response to danger or other cause of emotional reaction. Alcohol, the author believes, man has always found a