

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES

THE MANHOOD OF HUMANITY: THE SCIENCE AND ART OF HUMAN ENGINEERING. By Alfred Korzybski. E. P. Dutton & Co., 1921. Price, \$3.00.

"In the name of all you hold dear, you must read this book; and then you must re-read it, and after that read it again and again, for it is not brewed in the vat of the soft best-sellers to be gulped down and forgotten, but it is hewn out of the granite, for the building of new eras."

It must not be supposed that those powerful words are an irresponsible utterance of an excited enthusiast. Far from it. They were written by no less a person than Mr. H. L. Haywood, the sober-minded editor of *The Builder*, and may be found in the August number of that official organ of The National Masonic Research Society.

Indeed Haywood's estimate of the book does but confirm the judgment of many other competent critics including educators, engineers, logicians, mathematicians, biologists, psychologists, political philosophers, publicists, and other thinkers.

Let us hear a word from some of them.

"It is," writes Alleyne Ireland, "a contribution of the highest importance to the study of every problem in which human life is one of the factors."

In *The Freeman*, Ordway Tead says: "It is a forthright, earnest book by one who has seen a vision and would share it with his fellows."

Dr. Eric T. Bell, an eminent mathematician, says that "it took a genuine flight of genius" to make "Korzybski's main discovery that plants, animals and men are respectively energy-binders, space-binders, and time-binders." And Dr. Bell adds that "Anyone but a congenital idiot will get out of this book as much entertainment of a lasting kind as is contained in a whole library of romance."

"I consider Count Korzybski's discovery of man's place in the great life movement," writes Robert B. Wolf, Vice-president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, "as even more epoch-making than Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation."

Writing in *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Max Meenes states that "The Manhood of Humanity is a truly remarkable contribution toward a scientific study of humanity and should command the attention of all interested in humanity's problems."

Dr. Petrunkevitch, Professor of Zoology at Yale, thinks its "main principles are so important that the book should be carefully studied by all men of science."

Dr. L. O. Howard, eminent entomologist, in his presidential address at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Toronto, 1921, said: "Count Korzybski in his remarkable book, *Manhood of Humanity*, gives a new definition of man, . . . and concludes that humanity is set apart from other things that exist on this globe by its time-binding faculty, or power, or capacity." Dr. Howard adds: "It is, indeed, this *time-binding* capacity which is the principal asset of humanity."

And Dr. Walter N. Polakov, well-known engineering counselor and distinguished author of *Mastering Power Production*, says: Korzybski's book "is bound to become our new Organum, interpreting Humanity to itself, and ushering in a new epoch."

It would be easy to swell the chorus of similar testimony to vast proportions, for abundant material is at hand, but it would be superfluous to do so. What has been submitted is enough to arrest the attention of even the dullest minds. For it is perfectly evident that a book that calls forth such words from such men, representing as they do almost every great field of scientific scholarship, is a book that you and I must read, and re-read till we understand, if we are not to be dumbly ignorant of the most helpful and hopeful thought of our troubled time.

Lest any one reading these words might suspect that my own estimate of the book is but an echo of the opinions above quoted, I may be permitted to say that more than a year ago and shortly after the book came from the press I wrote as follows in *The New York Evening Post*: "We have here a book that is worthy of the times. Physically it is not large, but spiritually it is great and mighty—great in its enterprise, in its achievement, in the implications of its central thought, and mighty in its significance for the future welfare of men, women and children everywhere throughout the world."

What, pray, is that enterprise? What does the book aim at? It aims at turning the world's thought towards establishing the greatest of all conceivable things—the science and art of *human engineering*—the science and art of an engineering statesmanship magnanimous enough to embrace the entire world.

But what, pray, is human engineering? Human engineering—engineering statesmanship—is to be the science and art of coordinating the civilizing energies of the world and directing them to the advancement of the welfare of all mankind including posterity. Nothing conceivable could be nobler than that. In that great good are embraced all possible goods.

We are at once confronted with a great question. What is the science and art of human engineering to be *based* upon? It goes without saying that the basis must be a scientific basis—some kind of scientific knowledge. And the question is: scientific knowledge of *what*? The answer is: scientific knowledge of human nature—scientific understanding of the essential nature of Man.

Here we encounter the most important question that can be asked: What *is* Man? What is that quality or capacity in virtue of which human beings are *human*? What is the *distinctive* place of mankind in the hierarchy of the world's life?

In connection with that question Korzybski has rendered the world an immeasurable service. He has indeed propounded the question to himself but that is not what I mean. He has made it perfectly plain that the question is

at once supreme and fundamental but neither is that what I mean. What I mean is that he has given the great question the *best* answer it has received in the history of thought—an answer which, because it is true, is infinitely superior to all its rivals. What is the answer, It is an answer defining our humankind in terms of Man's peculiar relation to what we call *Time*. The words are these (p. 60): "Humanity is the time-binding class of life."

What do the words mean? It is evident that the burden of the meaning is borne by the term *Time-binding*. For the significance of this really mighty term the reader must be referred to the book itself where, says the mathematician and poet, Professor Bell, "the ideas are stated with such admirable clearness in so many different and illuminating ways that any person of average intelligence can grasp the essential meaning at one reading." Should any one desire to examine my own attempt to lay bare in a few words the great term's central nerve, I may refer him to pages 428-431 of my *Mathematical Philosophy* where I have dealt with Korzybski's conception of man in the light of modern advances in logical theory.

Just as soon as readers grasp the meaning of the term *time-binding* and come thus to understand the author's concept of Humanity, then and not before they will understand both why he denies the ages-old mythical idea that humans are hybrids of natural and supernatural and why he also denies and denounces the zoological conception that humans are a *species of animals*.

It is instructive to compare the logic of Korzybski's great work with that of Professor Robinson's interesting book, *The Mind in the Making*. The aim of the authors is the same—the welfare of mankind. They are both of them evolutionists. They both believe that man is sprung from Simian stock. Korzybski nevertheless maintained that humans are not animals for animals, says he, are merely *space-binders* while man is a *time-binder*. Robinson, on the other hand, contends that humans are animals and endeavors again and again to rub that belief indelibly into the minds of his readers. *Why* do such thinkers as Robinson regard man as a species of animal? Is it because man has been evolved out of animal ancestry? If *A* has been evolved from *B*, do they really think that *A* is therefore necessarily a species of *B*? If heat be applied to ice there is evolved first water and then steam. Is steam to be rightly regarded as a species of ice? Man has been evolved from Simian mammals, mammals from reptiles, reptiles from fishes, and these probably, through a long course, from "microscopic globules of living matter, not unlike the simplest bacteria of today." Are thinkers like Professor Robinson prepared to follow their own "logic" and say that our humankind may be helpfully regarded as a species of ape, as a species of reptile, as a species of fish, as a species of ancient microscopic globule of living matter, not unlike the simplest bacteria of today? If it should be discovered in Professor Robinson's time that the organic and the living have been evolved from the non-living and inorganic, would the learned historian then argue that the living is a species of the non-living and that the organic is a species of the inorganic? The evolution of the *Novel* is an indubitable fact but it is a ridiculous contention that whatever is new must be a species of all the things from which it has sprung.

Is it contended that humans are species of animal *because* humans have certain animals organs, functions, and propensities? One would be not less

foolish to contend that animals are plants because they have many organs and functions that plants have or to contend that solids are surfaces because solids have some properties that surfaces have or to contend that fractions are whole numbers because they have some properties that whole numbers have.

The philosophy of many a historian and many a zoologist would be greatly improved by a solid course in freshman logic.

Korzybski's concept of Man is the core of his book and the organic center of his philosophy. If you will master that concept you will find that it is related to the other ideas in the work as the sun is related to the planets and planetoids of our solar system. And as you continue your meditation you will discover much more.

If you are a historian you will find that the new concept of man demands a new philosophy of history—a philosophy that shall study the evil rôles which false concepts of human nature have played from time immemorial.

If you are a student of ethics, you will find that the new concept affords a scientific basis for a moral system infinitely superior alike to the ethics of magic and myth and to the zoological ethics of the righteousness of might—the ethics of tooth and claw, competition, combat, and war.

If you are an educator you will find that the highest obligation of home, school, and press is to teach boys and girls and men and women everywhere to understand and to feel what they as humans really are—not animals nor hybrids of angel and beast but time-binders, civilizers, inheritors of the achievements of the dead, charged to use the inheritance justly and to transmit it with increase to he yet unborn.

If you are an engineer—and we are all of us engineers in some respect—you will find that Korzybski's conception of man is the solid basis for that science and art of *human engineering*—that science and art of engineering statesmanship—whose function it is to study the time-binding energies of the world, the civilization-producing energies of our kind, to coordinate them and to direct them to the welfare of all mankind including posterity.

I will close by repeating what I said elsewhere. "Not to read this book is to miss the best thought of these troubled years."

CASSIUS J. KEYSER.