Reviews.


With engaging frankness Miss Bradby confesses in her preface that she is unable to understand most books on philosophy. The wide range of her knowledge which this volume reveals will probably lead the reader to be sceptical as to this; but the contents make it clear that Miss Bradby's interests and sympathies are so deeply concerned with struggling humanity and the press of life, that she would obviously have but little leisure to devote to detached philosophic speculations. The book deals with vital social problems of the day, and it has a much more practical aim than its title would suggest. At the outset it is made clear that the modern logician is not so much concerned with formal logic as with the 'machine' which "turns out faulty coins" (p. 15). Attention is drawn to the notable "contrast between the purpose and achievement of human society" (p. viii), and the suggestion is made that the failures of civilization are partly due to defective logic. The purpose of this book is thus to indicate the personality factors responsible for the inconsistencies which are apparent in so many directions.

Part I is concerned with the psychological principles upon which the views developed in this volume are based. The relation of reason and intelligence to intuition and instinct are first indicated. It is shown that "reason does not supply a motive to action, it does not set us going, though each and every motive which actuates us sets reason going (p. 29) . . . . Reason emerges from a background of instinct and intuition (p. 46)." Considerations along these lines lead to the question of "Dreams and Unconscious Symbolism", a subject which enables Miss Bradby to develop her fundamental thesis. This is to the effect that the function of reason is operative at all levels of mental development. "Reason is present in the unconscious mind. . . . Rules of logic are not . . . contradicted in the unconscious . . . . but merely applied to less developed material. . . . All logic is one, that of rational mind continually developing. The laws of a growing plant hold good of all its stages (p. 47) . . . . The typical myth or fairy tale expresses subjective truth; the scientific observation expresses objective truth; and both are equally logical" (p. 61). The section concludes with a study of language in relation to the structure and development of thought.

Part II is included under the heading of "Unconscious Motives the Source of Fallacy", a title which indicates the line of thought which Miss
Bradby pursues. Her argument is best indicated by a few quotations from the book itself. "The logical aim has three aspects: to act effectively, to feel justly, and to think logically. In each case the mental act is logically valid when subjective elements bear a certain ratio to each other. . . . Observation, argument, emotion, and conduct are all illogical when the subjective element does not tally with the objective." This failure in-proportion arises when "thought, feeling, and action are disproportionately subjective because of unconscious traits which remain unrecognized by the conscious self" (p. 95). "Unconscious factors producing fallacy . . . are not fallacious in their proper sphere, but only when they operate in consciousness without becoming harmonized. They are modes of thought proper to dream life, thrust into waking life; emotions and desires belonging to a more primitive personality unconsciously determining conduct; old wine in new bottles" (p. 98).

With such psychological principles as a background, Miss Bradby proceeds to examine some typical instances of illogical conduct and to gauge the unconscious motives which she assumes to underlie them, and in subsequent chapters she gives an excellent analysis and classification of a number of characteristic fallacies.

Up to this point, then, the writer shows in her own original fashion the influence of emotional factors and unconscious trends in the development of opinions and attitudes. Having shown what is wrong with people, she proceeds, in Part III, to suggest the remedy. She here discusses a number of highly controversial topics such as progress, good and evil, religion, immortality, education, the drink problem, and prostitution. These questions are somewhat outside the scope of psychology, and it is inevitable that their discussion within such a short compass should be somewhat superficial and at times unconvincing, as, for instance, when Miss Bradby expresses the view in regard to prostitution that "the problem is chiefly how to cure a neurotic habit, and above all to prevent its manifestations in childhood and youth" (p. 240).

The writer reveals herself as a strong believer in human progress. "Humanity," she writes, "fights a winning battle. Great as are the forces of the enemies of progress, who can doubt that they are weaker to-day than ever before in the history of the world?" (p. ix). Many eminent people do of course doubt this; but such reasoned optimism is welcome at a time when there is much that would seem to discourage such a view. We are inclined to think, however, that Miss Bradby somewhat over-estimates the part which self-realization will play in accelerating this progress, and that her enthusiasm for the 'new psychology' leads her at times to express views with which it is difficult to agree. Thus, in discussing the educational methods of the future, she writes, "Accordingly the teacher will encourage his pupils to observe and study their dreams at night wherein each may discover his own habitual tendencies, the sort of subjective story, or situation, which is constantly being woven, and projected on the objects of waking experience, by the mind at its unconscious levels" (p. 206). The picture which this suggestion arouses of a school peopled by little psychopathologists is far from representing what
one would wish children to be. Apart from the fact that Miss Bradby's views as to the psychology of dreams have by no means passed beyond the region of debate, it is an extremely moot point whether the encouragement of dream analysis as a general habit is desirable in the interests of mental health, though its value for therapeutic or scientific purposes is no doubt considerable. We do not indulge in a laparotomy unless there is something the matter.

Miss Bradby covers such a wide range of debatable subjects that criticisms such as the above naturally suggest themselves. We can, nevertheless, cordially recommend her book. She has an ingenious and fertile mind, and she strikes out an original line of her own. She has written a readable, interesting, and suggestive book. She has, moreover, the most commendable habit of always providing examples—and excellent ones it may be said—to emphasize the points which she wishes to make; as, for instance, that of the lady who dreamt that she "turned into a tablecloth to escape from someone who insisted that she should do pioneer work" (p. 51). From which it would appear that the unconscious has a certain dry humour of its own; and there would, after all, seem to be no particular reason why this should not be the case. The amusement which patients with dementia praecox so often derive from their hallucinatory experiences would seem to favour such a view.

H. Devine.


The author writes as one who "himself knows what nervous breakdown is", and who now publishes his experience in the hope of helping others who unhappily know it. Perhaps this is merely a literary artifice; at any rate he spares us the details of his case. To nervous people in search of advice—and we all like to listen to it sometimes, especially if it is impersonal—his book may be commended; they will find plenty of it here, for much of what he has to say is cast in that form. But the excellence of his book does not lie merely or mainly in the excellence of the advice it contains. Not only, for instance, does he properly deprecate introspection, but—what is more to the purpose—he directs his readers' attention in practical ways to outside things. So, from such matters as the importance of chewing one's food, or measures for the combating of insomnia, we are quickly led to more alluring topics—the pleasures of the garden, the art of listening to music, the choice of books, the sweet influences of religion—and long before nearing the end we have ceased to consider seriously what special value his recommendations may have for nervous people, our attention being taken up rather by the general interest of the subjects he raises. This is as it should be, and is a main reason why his pleasant and temperately written homily should be useful to those to whom it is principally addressed.

Sydney J. Cole.