Reviews and Notices of Books


An ambitious attempt is made in this book, written from the sociologist’s point of view, to sum up our knowledge of human personality. The author reviews the conclusions, as he interprets them, reached by biology, genetics, endocrinology, psychology, criminology and psychiatry regarding the nature of man and the determinants of his conduct.

The result is disappointing. Statements which cannot be supported are numerous. The section upon ‘The Glandular Basis of the Personality’ has many such. For example, we are told (p. 67) that the personality may be controlled by overaction of the posterior pituitary. No evidence is given, or available, to prove this. Dr. Berg describes a type of personality as the ‘status thymico-lymphaticus’ and tells us how it may be ‘cured.’ In 1931 the Status Lymphaticus Committee declared that there was no evidence that so-called ‘status thymico-lymphaticus’ had any existence as a pathological entity. Many old errors are repeated and no new information given in the chapter on ‘Personalities in Conflict.’ Statistics contradict the author’s statement that ‘hysteria is the most common of all neuroses.’ Few will agree that ‘Charcot was the first to use hypnotism scientifically’—or, perhaps, that he ever used it scientifically.

The book was written ‘in view of the acute need of well integrated studies of our sometimes bewilderingly complex life.’ It fails to satisfy this ‘acute need,’ and we must still await ‘a synthesis of modern research.’


The previous editions of this work (first published in 1921) have been reviewed in this Journal. The third edition has been enriched by the author’s wider experience; and in aim and plan it is virtually a new book. Dr. Brown, while accepting much of the systems of Freud, Jung and others, declines the label ‘eclectic,’ preferring to regard his position in and contribution to psychology and psychotherapy as ‘synthetic.’ The term is not a happy one—it suggests an artificial product. This is, however, far from being the
case. The views here expounded have stood the test of time and practical application.

The book gives a balanced survey of medical psychology and as such it can be unreservedly commended. The appendices, five in number, occupy about a fifth of the book; they will appeal chiefly to the trained psycho-pathologist. An excellent index is provided.

E. A. B.