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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

The Metaphysics of Nature. CARVETH READ. Second edition. London: Adam and Charles Black. 1908.

The second edition of Professor Read's book is distinguished by fifteen pages of appendices, on "Truth," "Consciousness," "Being," and "the Soul and Freedom." In other respects the edition is substantially the same as the first. The appendices are offered as clarification and further elaboration of the main doctrines of the book; but it must be confessed that they serve this purpose with but doubtful success. One would expect an essay on "Truth" to be vibrant with the searching discussion which has occurred during the past few years. Professor Read's appendix gives little hint that anything whatever has occurred since the days of Kant and Spencer. He reiterates his general conclusion, given on page 73 of the first edition, that "truth requires clear and distinct conceptions and judgments, cohering with reality, and harmonizing among themselves according to the analogy of experience: the reality with which true judgments must cohere is empirical reality, or human perception, their harmony is logical consistency and systematic coordination under the principle of causality." The very words are battle cries and alarms! It is true that Professor Read takes cognizance of present-day controversy by discussing the "copy-theory" of truth. Whether truth is a "copy" of reality, he says, "depends, in the first place, upon what is meant by 'reality.'" If it means some possible mode of being that is not and can not be perceived, nor yet conceived from sensory data and in analogy with perception, we can not strictly be said to *know* of any such being, and, therefore, can not know whether any doctrine of ours is to copy it" (p. 357). This, however, is for him no ground for dismissing transcendent being, but simply for relegating it to "that background of belief out of which knowledge has been differentiated." Truth (and knowledge) therefore lies wholly within the sphere of empirical reality. Granted this, "the truth of perception is not a copy of [empirical reality], but, so far as perception is immediate sensation, it is reality itself. So far, however, as certain qualities of an object perceived are not immediately sensed but are subrepresented, such as the hardness of the rock which I see, the truth of perception depends upon a sort of 'copying,' or (as I prefer to say) correspondence, which may be verified by touching the rock" (p. 359). Further, truth is not simply a personal matter, but is one "in which generations have cooperated." Perception and conception, moreover, are in large measure symbolic.

Much of this is obviously true; but much of it is obscure, and more of it is questionable. Not to speak of its failure as a criterion of value-truths, and of the insufficiency of its vague empiricism, the view leaves us, at best, with the old static conception of truth and reality, yielding no clear word upon the problem which is, at the present time, pressing so hard for solution—the problem of "reality in the making." The essay is typical of the character of the whole book: it is distinctly not on the fringing-line of philosophic thought.

A like inadequacy is betrayed in the attempt to elaborate the concept of consciousness. The author makes the surprising admission: "The term consciousness has a very conspicuous place in the *Metaphysics of Nature*; and friends have asked what I mean by it. It seems that I have nowhere tried to explain what consciousness is: having assumed, in fact, that everybody knows." The confession is frank; yet it is startling from a metaphysician who writes, with emphasis, "Consciousness is reality; is all we know of reality; is not a phenomenon," and who speaks as lightly and easily of "generic consciousness" as if it were a matter of every-day acceptance.

Although the author confesses himself to have been awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by Professor James's article, "Does Consciousness Exist?" one wonders how fully he has been aroused. His own definition is not reassuring: "Consciousness, then, is the totality of experience or awareness in the world, awareness of things, images, relations, feelings, however clear and distinct, or obscure and undifferentiated. There is no 'diaphaneity' about it; it is always actual, concrete, particular in itself (though its significance may be general). And consciousness is the best name for it: an undefinable name, of course; of which 'experience' and 'awareness,' though sometimes convenient substitutes, are not adequate synonyms. Consciousness has the greatest simplicity and universality of denotation" (p. 360).

Professor Read goes so far as to hold that consciousness is not a substance, but an activity, and to analyze consciousness into focal and marginal phases. In both cases, however, the discussion betrays a distressing lack of thoroughness of discussion and penetrating subtlety. The central position of the author deserves notice: "We should never speak of phenomena or any mode of experience as related to consciousness; for each phenomenon or experience, as far as it extends, is identical with consciousness. Consciousness is not definitely related to anything else; there is no positive term without it. All complete relations fall within consciousness" (p. 362).

Important, however, as this position is, it has not been defended with exhaustive care. This defect becomes particularly apparent when the reader is introduced to the culminating doctrine of the book, that transcendent being has two activities, consciousness and manifestation. Here it is imperative that the reader know the manner of the inclusiveness of consciousness and how this inclusiveness is related to the non-inclusiveness indicated in the statement: "Must we not attribute another activity to being whereby it is known objectively, besides the activity which is consciousness; and if so, must we not consider these activities as correlative?" (p. 368). This seems strangely at variance with the statement: "Consciousness is not definitely related to anything else; there is no positive term without it" (p. 362).

A graver difficulty lies in the assumption of generic consciousness. Professor Read disposes of a matter of the utmost significance with such inconclusive words as these: "In connection with this position, the conception of what I have called 'generic consciousness' (p. 332) seems to

me to have some interest for epistemology. It is admitted that we pass a good many months of infancy before we become distinctly aware of our individuality and personality, and that meanwhile we gradually become distinctly aware of things and the properties and movements of things around us. As persons we seem to be born into a world which pre-existed and is independent of us: it is not the work of self-consciousness. But it is the work of generic consciousness, without which being would not constitute an actual world. Generic consciousness, then, is the objectivity and necessity of nature in space and time, and all the categories are immanent there" (p. 364). It is impossible for the reviewer to criticize the last sentence, for he must confess that it is quite beyond his comprehension. And yet he feels that the author has something in mind that is of real importance.

The nerve of the book is its doctrine of transcendent being. In the text of the first edition, this doctrine was left in sad obscurity. The appendix attempts further elucidation. It turns out, however, to be little more than a recapitulation, which leaves the original difficulties really unsolved. "What is that thing in space which we all agree in perceiving, though it is a different perception for each of us? . . . We may most simply answer all these questions by supposing some condition of a phenomenon which needs, for the actuality of that phenomenon, that the conditions of a perceptual consciousness should be present. That condition I call being" (p. 365). "The criticism of 'being' shows that by itself it is necessarily empty. It can not be genuinely thought . . . but, by construction, being is an abstraction from consciousness . . . and it is only an indicative or irective category" (p. 366). Can we get any work out of this notion, he asks, in spite of its emptiness? "I propose to regard personal consciousness as a function, or activity, or (as it might be best to say) the actuality of that being of which the body is the phenomenon. Again, as we have seen that consciousness is a continuum without beginning, and that it may be supposed to accompany in some degree all phenomena, I propose to attribute it to the being of those phenomena. By that means we are able to think of the world as existing independently of us before we existed, inasmuch as its consciousness can be thought of by its resemblance to our own" (p. 366).

Being is further characterized as possessing the universal characteristics of the consciousness: "The argument is that (1) consciousness is reality, (2) that it is a factor of *all* reality, (3) that it is on a different level from the organism as a phenomenon, and that, therefore, we may transfer to being some of the attributes of consciousness, but not with equal confidence the attributes of phenomena, which are constructions in consciousness upon an otherwise unknown condition" (p. 367). But the inference that consciousness is more truly real than phenomena, is not justified in the argument. It rests upon the assumption that phenomena are *simply within* consciousness. Later, however, phenomena are held to be manifestations of being *correlative* with consciousness. So far as the argument goes, then, there is no reason to hold that consciousness is more truly real or more truly indicative of the nature of reality than

phenomena. The whole doctrine of transcendent being, in short, is developed with so little care that it can not be allowed to stand even as a plausible metaphysical hypothesis.

Criticism must be offered, too, of what is said of the continuity of consciousness, and of the "activity of manifestation." Neither in the original text nor in the appendix are these views clearly expounded. The same is true of the doctrine of *Allbeseelung*. This view, while central for the author, is scarcely more than outlined: certainly, its more serious difficulties are not even faced.

But the greatest defect of the book is its inadequate treatment of the concepts of time, space, and change. With regard to the new efforts to achieve a dynamic metaphysics the book really takes no stand. It is so largely concerned with the recapitulation of older views that it has neither time for nor interest in the newer developments of thought. One would suppose that a metaphysics of nature would at least take cognizance of such work as that of Mach, Ostwald, Pearson, Russell, Ward, Avenarius. If these men are mentioned at all—and some of the names do not even appear on the pages—it is only in swift passing, never in the serious effort to grapple with their views. In short, as a metaphysics of *nature*—so sadly needed—the book is far from being a success. With its ponderous effort to build up an empty hypothesis, it will serve as one more cause for scientists to smile at the vague futilities of philosophy.

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A Text-book of Psychology. EDWARD BRADFORD TITCHENER. Part I. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1909. Pp. xvi + 311. \$1.50.

The scope of this book is indicated by the following quotation from the preface: "The present work has been written to take the place of my 'Outline of Psychology.' The 'Outline,' which was stereotyped in 1896, had long passed beyond the possibility of revision, and the continued demand for it showed that there was still room in the science for a text-book which set experimental methods and experimental results in the forefront of discussion." As compared with the "Outline," the present "Text-book" bids fair, when its second volume is added, to run to about twice the size. In regard to style, it has by no means, as the author had feared, lost any of "the freshness and vigor of the first writing." It is distinctly written for students rather than for the psychologist; the student and his needs are constantly borne in mind, and uncommon care is taken to interest him in the questions at issue before plunging him into the sea of psychological discussion.

The present volume covers the quality and intensity of sensation, feeling, and attention. There is also a brief chapter on synesthesia and the image.

The primary emphasis of the book is on the descriptive, or analytic, type of psychologizing—on the discovery of conscious elements and their manner of combination. But teachers who prefer to lay the emphasis elsewhere will be glad to see that the treatment is by no means one-sided