

**Britt, Stuart Henderson**, *Social Psychology of Modern Life*. Farrar and Rinehart. New York 1941. (xviii and 562 pp.; \$3.75)

**Walton, Albert**, *The Fundamentals of Industrial Psychology*. McGraw-Hill Book Co. New York 1941. (xiii and 231 pp.; \$2.00)

**Brennan, Robert Edward**, *Thomistic Psychology*. Macmillan. New York 1941. (xxvi and 401 pp.; \$3.00)

Britt puts his methodological principle as follows: "In social psychology, . . . the primary consideration is not whether something is true which people believe to be true. The important thing is that whatever people believe to be true is true for them. It may make little difference psychologically whether myths or stereotyped beliefs have any real foundation. If the 'pictures in our heads' are believed by us to represent the world around us, then they are of the utmost psychological significance in determining the things we will do." Guided by this principle, Britt's social psychology casts aside all ideological glorifications and taboos and, with cynical frankness, describes not how men ought to be, but how they actually feel, think and live in the age of mass culture. Present-day existence emerges as a series of stereotyped performances, values and ideas, a life in which even the most personal and most sacred spheres of "individuality" are governed by the standards of efficiency, prestige and conformism. Britt thus uses his freedom from value judgments as a device for picturing the world as it is today. The final standard of behavior ruling that world is compliance with "normality," and normality is nothing but a "statistical concept," designating the "culturally sanctioned way of behavior." The traditional ideal of "personality" breaks down in this world, while the much vaunted rationality of modern man gives way to "infantile ways of thinking" and to the "automatic behavior" characteristic of the monopolistic era. "Non-conformity is punished"—this is the threat which drives the individual to identify himself wholesale with his "leaders" and to become an acquiescent member of the crowd. Education, personal as well as social, dwindles to instruction in compliance and to the learning of recognized rules of competition, the latter increasingly taking shape as collusion among the few most powerful groups. Standards of prestige permeate and shape the modes of sexual satisfaction and the religious attitudes. Contempt and hatred of the weaker, racial discrimination, cruelty and resentment are shown to be the social consequences of stereotyped frustration. The book draws extensively on past and present researches in all fields of theoretical and experimental psychology and is one of the most provocative and stimulating documents of contemporary social science. It is supplemented by a careful bibliography for each section.

Walton's book, a volume of the Industrial Series, is written for supervisors entrusted with the task of "getting the most out of the worker." It is written for the "enlightened supervisor," of course, the man who knows that the worker is more than an engine and who therefore takes account of humane and psychological factors. This reviewer is not interested here in the question whether the psychologically refined and streamlined form of "scientific management" discussed in the book yields a greater efficiency than the older forms; the book concerns him only insofar as it supplements

and illustrates, in the sphere of industrial labor, the findings of Britt's *Social Psychology*.

To Walton, as to Britt, the "personality" is nothing other than as it appears today: the "impression made on other people." Man is a compound of habits, and the development of the personality consists in learning and utilizing those abilities and qualities which make him a success at his job. Quite naturally, the personality thus becomes an object—the sum-total of responses expected by society from its willing members. "We have names for people who propose anything not customary, and the name lists them as public enemies." Nobody wants to be a public enemy. The elaboration of "dependable reaction patterns" becomes the prerequisite for success, while everything that transcends the realm of recognized efficiency becomes a taboo. The emphasis of the book lies on the means and methods the supervisor can use to promote and perpetuate dependable reaction patterns. The trend is definitely towards managerial "leadership." Among the means suggested to "increase the positive attractiveness" of work we find that of prying into the worker's personal affairs: "The leader should make it his business to learn a fact or two about every man working for him, a fact outside of the work he is doing in the shop or office. Every item of personal information so gained is a handle by which to lay hold of a man, whether he be above or below us in the organization." Reports on a number of tests show the great possibilities for increasing efficiency and output by "scientific" handling of rest periods, motions, and by separating groups of workers from the factory at large and segregating them in isolated rooms.—Walton makes his point perfectly clear: the treatment of man as a mere machine must give way to his treatment as a machine with human gadgets, to be skillfully handled by "enlightened" leaders.

Compared with the frightful actuality of the first two books, Brennan's study in *Thomistic Psychology* reads like a sorrowful contemplation of something that since long has ceased to exist. This is certainly not the fault of Thomas Aquinas, nor of his commentator. Brennan's account of Thomas' doctrine of man is thorough and accurate, well organized and documented. He starts with an analysis of Aristotle's psychology and ends up by contrasting the methods and findings of Thomistic psychology with modern psychological and anthropological schools. He has made no attempt, however, to contrast the "eternal truths" of Thomistic psychology with the actual fate of man's nature in society. Society has not only neglected or forgotten but changed the nature of man and thereby changed the forms in which the eternal truths must be presented and realized. The mere repetition of the old forms will hardly help to reestablish their actuality.

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