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Books of Special Interest

Aesthetics

THE FOUNDATIONS OF AESTHETICS.
By C. K. OGDEN, I. A. RICHARDS and
JAMES WOOD. New York: International
Publishers. 1925. \$2.50.

Reviewed by V. F. CALVERTON

The Modern Quarterly

THE history of aesthetics is disenchantingly replete with vagueness and futility. Arguments over definition of the aesthetic develop into pyrotechnical flares of emotional prejudice, seldom ascending beyond the hopelessness of logomachy. Aesthetic appreciation is as goatishly whimsical as tropical weather. The confusion of metaphysics is scarcely more bewildering and dismal than the racing criss-cross of theories that have been advanced to explain the origin and nature of the beautiful.

In this book "The Foundation of Aesthetics" by Ogden, Wood, and Richards, an attempt is made "not to bring theories into opposition with one another, but by distinguishing them to allow to each its separate sphere of validity." The purpose is excellent, the execution poor. Ambitious in theme, it is superficial and sketchy in treatment. Without attempt at persuasion, except in the pallid presentment of the theory of Synthesis, the book is minus eloquence or vigor. There is little serious endeavor to interpret aesthetic standards, little valid effort to clarify aesthetic theories by scientific analysis or exposition. Concern with art-theoreticians and their dogmas, on the part of the authors, is sufficient and superficial. There is an abundance of quotation but a paucity of explanation. The only outstandingly genuine and illuminating criticism to be discovered is the consideration of Clive Bell's hypothesis of "significant form" and his search for "some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke this (aesthetic) emotion."

In fairness to the authors let us illustrate our criticism by consideration of one of the chapters. The one on "Social Effects" will provide an excellent example. The chapter, which is but two and a half pages in length, begins with reference to "the peculiar group of uplift doctrines which have emerged from the industrious homes of the late Victorian moralists," mentions the theories of Ruskin, Morris, and Tolstoy in less than fifteen lines, adds neither interpretation nor appraisal, and aside from a Plate omits all discussion of their application. There follow snatch quotations from Professor Lethaly—"art is best conceived as beneficent Labor which blesses both him who gives and him who receives"—Middleton Murry—the artist "by the rhythm of his own progress becomes more and more a vehicle of the spirit which is forever wrestling with its own materiality"—and Clutton Brock—the beauty of art "is always produced by the effort to accomplish the impossible and what the artist knows to be impossible." If there are consistency and continuity in these quotations in a chapter on "Social Effects" in the Foundations of Aesthetics they must be too esoteric for critical analysis. After these quotations comes another quotation from a poem, the connection of which is difficult to decipher, and a concluding paragraph, declaring, in brief, that "as a post-war phenomenon the chief function of gratulation and homiletic is presumably the promotion of comfortable feeling in the hearts of men of good will, and as such no doubt it has a certain value." A quotation from Baudelaire's "Curiosités Esthétiques" gives the final touch.

This is loose handling of material. It is certainly without value as exposition. Surely it does not advance our understanding of "social effects" or perceptibly widen or intensify our appreciation of the principles of aesthetics.

How a chapter on "Social Effects" or a book on "Foundation of Aesthetics" can be written without a consideration of the social background of art, the social background even of aesthetic criteria and predilections, is hard to understand. Why aesthetic shibboleths vary, why the aesthetic tastes of the eighteenth century were different from those of the nineteenth—certainly such problems cannot be neglected in a treatise on the foundations of aesthetics. Such neglect is evidence of deficient method. Take the origin of aesthetic criteria as discussed by Plechanov or the matter of the landscape as handled by Taine! The landscape, for instance, developed in Italy only at the end of the Renaissance, at the time of its decay. For the French artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century it has no profound meaning. In the nineteenth century this changed.

Cities multiplied and enlarged; industrialism drew millions into the confines of congested urban life. Nature, the mountains, the landscape took on a new meaning. They offered a retreat from the compression and artificiality of city life. The landscape, once so ugly to Madame Maintenon, became esteemed for its own sake, painters idealized it, philosophers went to it for stimulation. "The landscape seemed tedious . . . there was nothing uglier than this mountain for the people of the seventeenth century," wrote Mr. Paul—this same landscape and mountain in the nineteenth century became the source of inspiration.

All of this relationship of aesthetic criteria with social conditions, such a necessary consideration in any foundations of the aesthetic, is omitted. The authors are too consumed with definitions of "states of equanimity and freedom of spirit" to deal with the origins of aesthetic appreciation. Yet a book concerned with "foundations" can scarcely avoid origins; effects become meaningful only through knowledge of their causes.

An English Poet

THE UNKNOWN GODDESS. By HUBERT WOLFE. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1925. \$1.75.

Reviewed by EDWARD DAVISON

OF the younger English poets who have yet to be granted their fair due of recognition Mr. Humbert Wolfe is one of the most remarkable. Perhaps because of his peculiar but irritating mannerisms—an unsympathetic critic might justifiably call them affectations,—superficial and harmless as they are, the attention of many readers must have been diverted from more vital aspects of his work. Nevertheless it is hard to see how any could escape noticing that Mr. Wolfe has begun to forge for himself a very distinct and personable manner of writing, an incipient style from which spring some engaging virtues.

This new book of poems exploits the mannerisms as well as the manner. In the matter of punctuation Mr. Wolfe declines to fall into line with his peers (to say nothing of his masters): he also refuses to adopt the almost universal English usage by which a poet begins each line with a capital letter. There is no reason why he should not please himself in spite of the fact that he gains nothing by letting such bees hum in his bonnet. But the kind of reader who is most likely to appreciate his poetry is nearly always the kind of reader who will merely revise the eccentric punctuation until it conforms with the familiar. The poet loses some part of our attention by imposing this innocent but extra mental task and arouses a slight irritation by the other nonconformity. Certainly his verse gains nothing either of clearness or vitality for all these tricks. A slightly irritated reader is by no means ideal. The risk is not worth running when a poet has gifts like the very real gifts of Mr. Wolfe. He is wasting his time with trifles. The poetry's the thing.

There is in "The Unknown Goddess" a variety of theme and imaginative experience which tempts a reviewer to speculate upon the author's future. Mr. Wolfe is not yet mature, as his rather boyish mannerisms suggest. But fine things are argued by his firm and delicate touch. He can sometimes fix even the airiest language upon the canvas of reality so that it shows little sign of fading or falling away. When he fails, as, of course, he sometimes must, he fails bravely. He knows how to use some of the oldest poetic material without poaching it from other people:

*What joy doth Helen
or Paris have
where these lie still in
a nameless grave?*

*Not Helen's wonder
nor Paris' stir
but the bright, untender
hexameters.
And thus, all passion
is nothing made,
but a star to flash in
an Iliad. . . .*

And when he is writing, in the old poet's phrase, all out, like a man; when he lets the verse sing aloud, Mr. Wolfe rises into a finer style:
*So heavy is the air that from the strand
the voice of that boy singing hangs and
lingers,
as you could take the music in your hand
and drop it note by note, between your
fingers.*

This is hard, muscular, clean versification, excellent craft; and when Mr. Wolfe finds the themes to suit it he utters some of his best poems. And though his manner is subject to many variations it nearly always carries that air of individuality which is the sign of a good poet. His most dangerous fault at present is a certain tendency to mistake his fancy for his imagination. For each he has a separate kind of treatment and when, as more than once occurs, he uses the manner of one to express the matter of the other a spotted fever falls upon the passage and mars the poem. This and a weakness for themes too slight for his gifts should disappear in the future if Mr. Wolfe is willing to organize his poetry something closer than he has done so far.

A Satire of Today

A FOOL IN THE FOREST. By RICHARD ALDINGTON. London: Allen & Unwin. 1925.

Reviewed by RICHARD CHURCH

EVERY age has its satirists, and it is not likely that the present age may escape, for never were there such opportunities as now for the tired intellectual, or the embittered idealist, to express his disgust for the insane complexities, the sham crusades, the travesties of culture, which are to be found amongst mankind when any particular phase of his civilization is over-ripe. There are, too, so many brilliant men now; educated up to the hilt; bored in *extremis*; men who, to reverse Wordsworth's phrase, have been too much with the world.

Amid such a nest of scorpions, we are likely to become impervious to their venom. Mr. Aldington, however, has a peculiar and more intimate sting, for it is a virus prepared from wounds which he inflicts on himself. There is no satire so potent as that which is barbed with remorse.

The author calls his attack a "Phantasmagoria." It is a very concretely imagined phantasm, and the reader's interest is gripped from the beginning to the end of this long poem. It is written in free verse; but we find also that mocking hexameters creep in, to be jostled in turn by parodies of famous lines, parodies that are as savage and devastating as anything in the book.

There are three characters in the story; I, the protagonist; Mezzetin, the spirit of Imagination; and The Conjuror, who symbolizes the intellectual and quasi-scientific spirit. These three companions go off to Athens, in pursuit of the culture which flourished there in the Golden Days. They sit amid the ruins of the Parthenon; and Mezzetin, that wayward, lovable, irresponsible spirit of joy, wanders off and returns with wine, and a mandoline. Meanwhile the insensitive Conjuror, with that sort of nouveau-riche of the mind, which marks the pedant, discourses like a hired guide on "the splendor that was Greece," giving copious quotations. The response of Mezzetin is to strum ragtime on his mandoline, and to pour out the wine. Then evening falls, and Mezzetin sings

*The Evening Star that Sappho saw
And Shelley after Plato sang
Droops over London like a tattered
flower;*

*Incense of petrol and of burning coal
Rises to the thrones of Heaven,
Sniffed and snuffed by ungrateful gods.
Pursued by angry bishops out of breath,
The lovers kiss and murmur on the grass,
Defying vermin sacred or terrene.*

*The star that smiles upon the Parthenon
Glares over London like a carbuncle. . . .*

Night comes on, and the hero sleepily contrasts his vision of the classic days with that of his own time; while Mezzetin intersperses his poignant irrelevancies, in the manner of the traditional inspired idiot. Then the Conjuror wakes up, and after sermonizing again, rushes off to France.

There, in a world of war, the Conjuror is in his element. He bustles about, and works up a tremendous efficiency. It was through his inability to grapple with the cruel realities of the war, however, that Mezzetin is killed. So dies the Imagination, the force of poetry, freedom, and mirth. The hero, horrified and broken by his loss, is brought home by the Conjuror.

Arrived home, the Conjuror tries to "buck him up," and vows "to make a man

Books of Special Interest

of him again". But the brooding hero wanders about, becoming more and more alienated from the life of after-war London, unable to settle down because some *inbred scepticism destroyed all my plan*.

But the Conjuror dogs him, until one night, mad with rage, he flings the obtuse remembrancer over Waterloo Bridge. Then he is left alone; Mezzetin, his soul, his youth and faith, dead in France; and the Conjuror, the intelligence that is unable to cope with modern life, at last destroyed. So, bereft of both his heaven and his hell, he subsides at last to a mundane existence, and we leave him in his suburban home, with wife and children, and only occasional twinges of remembrance, when the

*Tinkling of a ghostly mandoline,
Memories of Athens and Naples,
Of a life once vowed to truth and beauty,
Pierce me till I start and gasp in anguish.*

On Ideas

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS. Vol. 11. Edited by the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University. Columbia University Press. 1925. \$3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM A. CAREY, S. J.

THE first paragraph of the prefatory note to this volume may serve as an introduction to this review. It reads: "In 1918 there appeared under the same title which the present work bears a volume of studies in the history of philosophy expressing the desire of those who have been identified with work in philosophy at Columbia to encourage research and the exercise of historical imagination, and to contribute something to the work being done in this department of human interest." The present volume marks a continuation of that endeavor.

I should like to outline "historical imagination" as the revealing expression in that note and in the volume under review. For worth while work in the history of philosophy postulates in the historian not the willingness merely, but the ability to enter the mind of his subject through the sometimes narrow entrance of the written word. It assigns him the great but difficult task of reconstructing thought from the inadequacy of language. Consider the distance between mind and mind. Two scholars on the same faculty, of recognized intellectual power, have discussed their differences time and again with the advantages of friendliness and possible instant correction, yet they cannot comprehend one another. Or a man toils to get down unmistakably the notion he has been meditating on for years. He gets other men to help him by the challenge of their minds, conscious none the less, that if his work is considerable, he will be honored by the refutation of opinions presumably from his writings, certainly not from his mind. He is sure to be misunderstood.

The further problem of trying to penetrate the true mind of one who has been dead for years is correspondingly more puzzling. History must, in the first place, furnish the facts outside the field of thought. When possible, home-life, masters, and reactions to them must be known, as well as something of that middle period when the thinker builded in his own mind before he spoke. Why first opinions were changed and certain jottings were never published are often important circumstances. In fact the searcher's own rounded knowledge and honest sympathy with the philosopher must be brought to bear on every detail that can make for a true reflection of his life and message.

The makers of this book have worked with these ideals and have worked well. They do not offer a text book rehearsal of the stock ideas about Plato or Hume, nor the jargon of doctrine copied and commented on. The attitude is rather: "I have been reading and thinking on... for a long time and I believe that we would understand his doctrine more clearly if we paid attention to this point. Let me explain it to you." And the reaction of the reader when he has followed the new road is one of stimulation.

Hume's own attitude, toward Universal Skepticism for instance, is found to be slightly different from popular belief. William James was not always as cer-

tainly as we would find as many people thought. On the other hand, I, acquainted with St. Thomas and Scholasticism, am more than once on spots where I was able to understand how hard it is for a man to write on Epistemology and Idealism without first hand knowledge of the work done in this field by the followers of Aristotle. (Here is a chance for historical imagination).

Readers may rest for themselves the points I have been making and the diversity of subjects is appealing. There are contributions to thought on Plato and Plotinus, Descartes and Malebranche, Hume, William James, and the Moral Philosophy of Benjamin Franklin. Other essays consider the problem of metaphysical simplicity, German Idealism and Utilitarianism, and one, the nearest to a light essay, discusses Unwritten Philosophy. In a supplement Professor Dewey reviews American Pragmatism, William James sharing the honors with Charles Sanders Peirce.

It is not necessary to review the opera in detail. Satisfactory notice would require for each as many words as this whole paper since the volume has the unity only of general aim and common binding. Besides the authors almost all differ in approach, and comment without explanation would do them injustice. The volume deserves commendation not because it is entirely free from error or is strikingly new in discovery, but because it does show historical imagination and succeeds admirably in clearing away a little the misunderstandings of the past.

The Tory Party

A HISTORY OF THE TORY PARTY. 1640-1714. By KEITH FEILING. New York: Oxford University Press. 1924. \$6.

Reviewed by T. J. C. MARTYN

IT IS Mr. Feiling's distinction that he is the first to write a continuous history of the Tory Party. With specific forethought he has written to provide "an introduction to that history, viewed as a whole," and he hopes to break "here and there some of the ground which is still to be cultivated by students of our political biography: for we are still without modern authoritative biographies of Clarendon, Danby, Shrewsbury, Sunderland, Nottingham, and Harley—to name only men in the first flight." And since, apparently, we may not interject Cromwell, Buckingham, and Monk, it can at least be said that the second flight contains men no less interesting than Edward Seymour, so "full of pride and insolence" that "he could reproach Charles II at his own Council board for 'prevarication' . . ."

The branch of history which the author treats is then political, but like Thucydides, who Macaulay thought was the greatest historian that had ever lived, Mr. Feiling has assumed the rôle of geographer, sociologist, and to a lesser extent philosopher. He has chosen the unilateral theme of Tory history and has stuck to his subject, with occasional illuminating digressions, throughout the swirl of events and the ever-changing tensions of national temper with which the period was filled. It is because of this unity of purpose, which so frequently coalesces with the general history of the period, that the ordinary reader will experience a sense of disappointment at the apparent *lacunæ* which are often encountered, as for example when the tragic fate of Charles I is dismissed with the single reference: "Nor did the King's death unite his supporters." In itself this is testimony to the vital part played by the Tories under the Stuarts, and it is with the Tories and not with the Stuarts that the author is concerned. In turn this makes the book of special and specialized interest; special in that it is circumscribed to party history; specialized in that its appeal is directed to the elder students of the historiographers' union. It is not a book for the casual reader.

The historical threads of the Tory Party are not easily taken up or, once taken up, easily followed. Out of the jumbled confusion of ideas and actions the cause for seven decades of political effervescence was germinated in the religious question and not, as is sometimes stated, in a conscious revolt against Tudor despotism. To persist in this error is,

to modernize an old axiom, as bad as putting water in the gas tank and gas in the radiator. The most solid inheritance which Henry VIII and Elizabeth left to the country, as the author well shows, was a Protestant religion, uniquely English, fitting national conceptions of polity and, perhaps more important, English conceptions of Englishmen.

Mr. Feiling makes the point, and it seems a good one, that with the Puritans in the East, the Presbyterians in the North, and the Royalists in the south and north-west, there were many traditional ties that held the various faithful true to one great family or policy; but such a statement must be tempered and the author tempers it, by recognition of the period as one of recusancy and political apostasy. There was, to use a paradox, a constant state of flux; Puritans were to be found on both sides of the fence as were the Cavaliers. No group (for in the early days it was impossible to speak of parties) supported Catholics, and no Protestant group countenanced Divine Right.

In describing the complex history of the Tories the author has written a magnificent work and has brought rare judgment and scholarship to bear on his subject. His style has of necessity been cramped, but, unfortunately, there is much unnecessary confusion. The habit of giving dates without the year is annoying and to the most careful of readers Halifax does not distinguish sufficiently the two gentlemen of that name, the Earl and the Marquess; there is also some confusion in following Danby in his upward flight to an earldom, a marquesate, and a dukedom. Condensation can hardly excuse these minor faults; for, and very happily, the author has found time and space enough for digression, as when he tells us that Clarendon's mother never saw London, that, after the Restoration, John Collins petitioned to be made turn-broach in the royal kitchen, while Bridget Rumney asked to be reinstated in the office of "supplying flowers and sweet herbs to the Court."

The real importance of the book can only be gauged by the stimulus it gives to future writers. One can imagine Philip Guedalla more profitably employing his time on the Seven Bishops than on "The Seven Sages," "The Seven Sleepers," or the "Seven Lamps of Liberalism." At present it can be welcomed as the most important and the most scholarly book on the Tory Party that has been written since Macaulay. New ground has certainly been turned up, and it is devoutly to be hoped that it will nourish many a seed sown by genius.

The Arnold Arboretum

AMERICA'S GREATEST GARDEN, THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM. By E. H. WILSON. Boston: Stratford Co. 1925. \$3.

Reviewed by NORMAN TAYLOR
Brooklyn Botanic Garden

MR. WILSON'S book, dealing briefly with the history and, at some length, with the collections at the Arnold Arboretum, scarcely needs more than a note of approbation for its content. But it calls to mind the shortcomings of perhaps the greatest outdoor museum in the world. Professor Sargent and his assistant, the author of the present book, have gathered from the four corners of the earth, shrubs and trees of great rarity and of undeniable beauty. This unrivalled collection, labelled and arranged with skill and taste, has made the Arboretum literally America's Greatest Garden.

Neither the Arboretum, nor this book about it, reflects in the least all that has happened in the world of plants since its inception in 1873. Then and for some years since, botany was the collection of plants, and the naming of them. But for the last twenty years it has so broadened its scope that today what the Arboretum has done so well is to be considered merely as a foundation upon which modern research on plants is reared. The marvelous adjustments of trees and shrubs to their environment; the instrumental study of these; the whole field of tree diseases; the fascinating fossil history of trees—these and many other phases of tree growth, the Arboretum and the present book ignore. To charge either the author or Professor Sargent with unconsciously ignoring them is absurd. That they have done it so completely looks very like a deliberate attempt to keep the Arboretum merely America's Greatest Garden, when it might be so much more.



Occidental Interpretations of the Far Eastern Problem

By H. G. W. Woodhead, H. K. Norton, and Julean Arnold

Mr. H. G. W. Woodhead, editor of the *Pekin and Tientsin Times* and an Englishman of twenty years' residence in China, is particularly concerned with acquainting Western readers with the present status of the Chinese Republic. It is China with her constant civil warfare, her nominal republic, her millions of illiterates, and her financial bankruptcy that he thinks Americans should know about.

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