

For the student, the book provides a statement of the problems of industry and the principles and practices that are available for their solution that is complete, orderly, and clear; and that is characterized throughout by an extensive knowledge of industrial theory and practice, united to an unflinching capacity to look upon both with balanced judgment born of common sense. For the manager, the book provides a clarifying sense of proportion and a conception of his job as a whole, and through its penetrating understanding of human nature and industrial conditions, repeatedly brings out significant points that are ardently confirmed by the manager's experience and yet often have not hitherto been brought into such clear focus in his thinking.

ELLIOTT DUNLAP SMITH²

Man and His Affairs: From an Engineering Point of View. By Walter N. Polakov, M.E., Williams and Wilkins Co., Baltimore, Md., 1925, pages 233.

In this book the author tells us that he has "attempted to popularize some significant aspects of the latest revolution in thought," a revolution brought about by the application of scientific methods to the universe, man included.

He first disposes of errors in the definition of man which "produce erroneous doctrines and these in turn being false to human nature, lead to *inhuman* institutions."

What are these errors in the definition of man? Man has defined himself as an animal. Animals are selfish. Therefore, selfishness has been taken to be a fundamental attribute of man. Again, survival of the fittest reigns among animals. Therefore, the animalistic survival of the fittest has been regarded as the basic law of human conduct. Again, animals accumulate and possess in order to support their existence. Therefore, it has been concluded, man is fundamentally an accumulator and possessor. Again, animals do not progress. They are bound by impersonal laws which are beyond their intervention. Hence, man must resign himself to the forces that make him what he is, not foolishly attempt to lift himself up by his idealistic bootstraps.

Let us suppose, however, says the author, that man has a quality which animals do not possess, or possess in so slight a degree as to be scarcely noticeable. This is what Korzybski has called the time-binding quality, the ability to roll up the past into the present in such a manner that the past becomes of living service to the present. Let us suppose that we proceed to define man as a time-binder. Then all the foregoing deductions fall completely to the ground. In the first place, man is not fundamentally selfish. He is dependent upon the accumulated ideas, inventions, discoveries of previous generations. These are handed on to him, while he in turn passes on his ideas and processes to succeeding generations. As a time-binder, therefore, man lives through the lives and into the lives of uncountable others.

Again, man through his accumulated skills, so controls his world—of geography, climate, etc.—that his type of

survival is in nowise comparable to that of animals and plants. "The survival of animals or plants is generally accompanied by *competition* for food, shelter and sex. Let a flock of sheep breed on a small island. The huskiest will push the weakest away from the grass. It is a competition for *space*. Man is not dependent upon the free gifts of nature. If wild wheat yields one bushel per acre, man develops sciences applicable to agriculture and grows thirty bushels per acre in the same time, which means that he gathers a thirty years' crop in one season. His is therefore competition in *time*. Such competition does not involve fighting or the elimination of the weak; but quite the contrary, it implies *cooperation* with the living and the dead; and it is in accordance with human nature to aid and protect the weak and helpless."

We note, therefore, how a change in definition changes our entire system of valuations. The philosophy of ruthless competition is simply based upon an assumption as to the essential nature of man which is utterly false.

The same is true of the fallacy with regard to man as a possessing and accumulating creature. Animals must possess things. Man must possess knowledge. "If men revolt and take possession of bread, they are bound to perish as soon as the bread is eaten. But if men absorb knowledge, they can provide themselves with food and everything else."

Finally, while it is true that animal life is in the main conservative, man constantly discovers new and improved methods of work, of conserving and utilizing materials and energy. Thus, the most fundamental quality in man is not his conservatism but his power to improve.

What is deeply necessary, then, is that we correct our false estimates of man. Most of our institutions are based upon the thought of man as a space animal. Could we become thoroughly and continuously aware of man as, in his deepest nature, time-binding, practically all our basic attitudes and institutions would be changed.

This is the central idea of the book. It is, of course, not the author's own, nor is Korzybski its originator. But in this matter, priority of rights is of small moment. It is the idea itself that is significant. The book is valuable insofar as it gives reiterated emphasis to a conception of man which alone is capable of freeing us from attitudes and processes profoundly subhuman.

The author pursues the idea into fields of education, economics and politics, showing that the substitution of the time-binding for the space-binding idea must mean the abandonment of the institutions of misunderstanding and antagonism for those of knowledge and cooperation.

The book is valuable because of its philosophic quality. We concern ourselves much with specific, practical methods. We seldom get down to basic ideas. Are our basic ideas false? If they are, then only tragedy awaits us. If we can find the true idea that is basic, we may be able to refashion our individual and social life in ways that will make for the continuous and enduring improvement of our common human lot. In the search for this basic idea the book, although pretending in no wise to be original, is of very real significance.

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at hearings before

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