

VII.—NEW BOOKS.

A First Book in Metaphysics. By WALTER T. MARVIN. Published by The Macmillan Company. Pp. xiv, 271.

THE present work is meant as a text-book for students, and contains copious lists of authors for concurrent reading. It is written in a simple and rather conversational style, not without Americanisms. The writer's views are those of the Six Realists of whom he is one. The two other general influences are James as to the nature of consciousness, and Bergson as to evolution.

Philosophy deals with indefinable notions and indemonstrable propositions on the one hand, and seeks for the highest possible generalisations on the other. Metaphysic is that part of philosophy that deals with the real as distinct from the ideal. This would cut out Metaphysic of Ethics altogether, and consistently the author does not touch it. But it would also seem to cut out Logic which he does treat.

In the third chapter the nature of what is known is discussed. What we know is always a relation between two or more entities. To direct awareness of terms he denies the name knowledge. I do not think the author makes himself clear on the distinction between 'acquaintance with' and 'knowledge about,' though he uses the terms. Since what we know when we have knowledge about anything (in which case alone does he use the word knowledge) is a proposition, and since he also says that it is a relation between terms, he is forced to call a great many things propositions to which no one could normally give that name. Thus the universe is defined as 'the true and complete explanation of all facts,' which makes the universe consist of a collection of propositions, whilst what it actually is is the entities and relations which these propositions are about. In fact when we know that xRy what we know is neither merely R nor the related complex (with both of which we can of course be *acquainted*), but that R relates x and y in this complex. The author says that anything exists if it is a part of the universe; but how can the parts of an explanatory theory exist? They can of course be propositions that assert existence; but this is a very different matter.

Some truths are perceptible. These are called facts apparently when the terms are particulars which are themselves perceived; if the terms are universals the truths are *a priori* propositions. Perception in this wide sense is the ultimate test of truth, and coherence is only an application of one important perceived truth—the Law of Contradiction. What I should prefer to say is that direct acquaintance with certain complexes gives rise to judgments of self-evident propositions about the relation of their terms. The author dismisses and rejects the rival theory that all analysis involves falsification and that coherence is the sole test of truth.

In the discussions which occur in various parts of the book on the subject of the reality of perceived objects (notably in chaps. iv. and xvi.) not enough answer is made to the difficulties of naïve realism. The

author always thinks that there is no alternative between the objects of perception being physical and their being mental. He has no difficulty in showing that there is not the smallest reason to think that they are mental in the sense in which the perceptions of them are mental, and therefore concludes that they are physical. But there are at least plausible grounds for thinking that they cannot be physical in the sense of being existentially and qualitatively independent of their percipients. His only attempt to meet the difficulties that suggest such an intermediate order of existents is to say that there is nothing impossible in the same thing having one set of qualities in one relation (*e.g.*, when seen), and another in other relations. But the real trouble is that it may stand in two sets of relation at the same time (*e.g.*, to sight and touch), and then have incompatible qualities; as when the top of a cup seen as an ellipse is felt as a circle.

Nominalism and realism with regard to universals are discussed in chapter x and the latter is accepted. I have some difficulty in following the author's use of the terms subsistence and existence. He makes true propositions and relating relations exist; and the latter at any rate is in accordance with ordinary speech. Apparently he holds that false propositions subsist, but he naturally does not enter this maze in an elementary book. But I understand that he would make the relations and propositions of non-Euclidian geometry existent; and here he seems to depart a good deal from ordinary usage.

In the chapter on Causation the statement that causation is reducible to implication and the placing of causal laws on a level with laws of what is eternal, as those of mathematics, seem to me liable to mislead students into thinking that ordinary causal laws have the logical necessity of those of pure mathematics.

The twelfth chapter on Evolution shows the influence of Bergson, though it compares favourably with that confused writer. Our author says that it seems probable (though it is not logically necessary) that there are existential propositions referring to later moments of time which cannot be inferred from any selection of propositions referring to earlier ones. Whilst this may very well be true the further statement that the future differs essentially from the present and past, and not merely *quoad nos*, seems to me quite groundless. In the first place there are probably plenty of causal series which have come to an end, and so there are existential propositions about earlier moments that cannot be inferred from any selection of propositions referring to later moments. Secondly, I do not see why the past has a better status than the future; no doubt some of the past *has been* perceived, but then it is equally true that some of the future *will be* perceived. And it seems to be purely a matter of our subjective limitations that some of the past *is now* perceived, and that none of the future is; even if the latter be true—which I should hesitate to assert.

Theism and Theology as a Metaphysic are discussed in chapter xiv. and its appendix. It is a pity that Dr. McTaggart's most excellent book, *Some Doctrines of Religion*, is not recommended for further study of the hypothesis of a finite God. Dr. Howison's essay might also have been mentioned.

In chapter xv. the Substance Hypothesis is discussed. It is referred to the subject-predicate theory of propositions, and this is of course rejected. I doubt whether the subject-predicate theory was often so silly as to hold that 'propositions are made up of two terms and no relation,' as we are told on page 172. Substance, however, is mainly rejected on the ground that it explains nothing; but one wonders whether it was ever meant to explain anything. The general theory of terms and rela-

tions explains nothing in particular ; and in one sense at least of substance terms are substances.

Chapter xvii. contains a severe criticism of Epistemology regarded as the basis of metaphysic. But its claims are put much too high ; I do not think it ever hoped to do more than to give limits to science and speculation ; though perhaps parts of Kant's *Metaphysical Bases of Natural Science* might be quoted against me.

The last part of the book is devoted to the philosophy of Logic, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and Psychology. It contains some errors. On page 223 the two entirely different forms of the syllogism in Barbara are by implication confused. Again it is said that the special sciences use logical principles as premises just as chemistry might use physical principles as premises. This shows that the author has not grasped the important distinction between the use of a logical axiom as a premise and its use as a principle of reasoning. I do not suppose that the syllogism is ever used as a premise in any science but logic and pure mathematics ; though it is used as a principle in all sciences.

In Psychology the author takes up James's view about Consciousness developed in the essay, 'Does Consciousness Exist?' This extremely paradoxical theory is not rendered less so by anything in this book, and it seems unwise to state it dogmatically to beginners. There are some very odd arguments in favour of the view that it is necessary for Psychology that our mental states should not be private to ourselves. If they were, we are told, it would be useless to write books on psychology. But it would only be useless if we had *nothing* in common ; if we have enough in common to make recognisable descriptions it is no more objection to psychology that we can each only perceive *some* mental states than it is to physics that we can *none* of us perceive *any* atoms. The author asserts in a note that the assumed privacy of mental life rests on the belief that we can know nothing but our own sensations. I should have thought that it rested on the tolerably obvious fact that we are not acquainted with those of any one else.

I have harped rather on points of difference, because in the main I am in agreement with the writer ; and I think that the book, supplemented by reading and lectures, would be a valuable introduction to Metaphysics for students.

C. D. BROAD.

Psychology: the Study of Behaviour. By WILLIAM McDUGALL, M.B., F.R.S. Home University Library of Modern Knowledge. London : Williams & Norgate, 1912.

THE importance of this little book is out of all proportion to its size. Written by one of our leading psychologists, and moreover by one whose original contributions to the science have been both numerous and varied, and of very great theoretical importance, the volume aims at setting out the exact position of psychology among closely cognate mental and physical sciences, and stating in broad outline the various fields of study which it covers. The author's standpoint is an original one. Defining psychology as "the positive science of the behaviour of living things," he admits that its province is coextensive with the province of physiology. He would differentiate the two sciences as at present studied by saying that "physiology investigates the processes of the parts or organs of which any organism is composed, while psychology investigates the activities of the organism as a whole, that is, those in which it operates as a whole or unit". The specific characteristic of "behaviour"