HALF-HOURS WITH THE W.E.A. AUCKLAND.

# Psychology Is Not Witchcraft

## Credulity and Fear Seem to be Man's Attitude Toward Psychology —What is Needful for Salvation?

THE following paragraphs were specially written for the "Radio Record" by Dr. R. P. Anschutz as a guide to his series of talks now being given from 1YA, Auckland, on Thursday evenings at 7.30.

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THERE have been a number of sermons and addresses in Auckland recently in which the "new psychology" has been described as the enemy of morals and religion. And we must all be familiar with some, at least, of the claims that have been made for the "new psychology" in education, criminal administration, business management, medicine and "life" generally. But remarkably little information seems to have been provided with all this talk. A few technical psychological terms have been adopted, and used rather recklessly, in common speech: "inferiority complex," "conditioning," "repression," "sublimation." But the average man remains as ignorant of psychology as he does of witchcraft. And his attitude to psychology seems, sometimes, to be much the same as his ancestors' attitude to witchcraft—an unreasonable amalgam of extravagant credulity and extravagant fear.

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THIS is obviously a very undesirable state of affairs for which, equally obviously, there is only one cure—knowledge. It is not very difficult to find out something about psychology. And, fortunately, a very little knowledge lays the bogy of the "new psychology." It is sufficient to point out that it doesn't exist.

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THE scientific study of psychology is as old as most of our other scientific studies—as old as the ancient Greeks. Aristotle wrote the first psychology treatise and the study of psychology has been continuous since his time. It has had its ups and downs, of course, like everything else. It went down, with everything else during the Dark Ages. It went up, with nearly everything else, at the Renaissance. And, then, it flared up in the nineteenth century, with biology, and it's still flaring.

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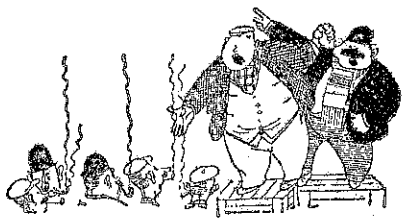
NOW it has happened quite regularly that whenever psychology has been on the upgrade, people have started to



talk of the "new psychology." That happened, to go no farther back, three hundred years ago, a hundred years ago, fifty years ago, just as it is happening now. And, of course, the "new psychology" has been different each time.

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BUT it has never been as different as it is to-day, because previously there has always been one system of psychology which has had general acceptance. And that is just what is lacking now. There is no "new psychology" now, but, at a conservative estimate, half a dozen "new psychologies."

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BUT the layman will be going about his pursuit of psychology in quite the wrong way if, acting on this information, he decides to read forthwith the authoritative statements of the leaders of these various schools to decide for himself which has had the truth revealed to him. These men are indeed rivals for the centre of the stage but, although they sometimes have that appearance, they are not perpetual antagonists. And none, if you question him at all closely, claims to have discovered the whole truth about psychology, as rival theologians claim to have discovered all that is needful for salvation.

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THE position is rather that each has found some method of dealing with a few of the facts of psychology and is trying to push that method as far as it will go (and farther) in the explanation of other facts. The disagreements of contemporary psychologists are conflicts of method rather than of creed. And to understand their methods it is first of all necessary to consider their observations and, more particularly, their experiments. These are their solid achievements—what they have done, and not (to put it crudely) what they have said. Their experiments will still be quoted when their generalisations are regarded as curiosities. And it is on a consideration of their experiments that any real appreciation of the contemporary position in psychology must be based.

IT " that is not all. You cannot understand the contemporary achievements of psychology without knowing something about those past achievements which have become the stock-in-trade of the text-books. The contemporary schools are not starting from the beginning, but with two thousand years of psychological study behind them. Each of them claims the privilege of continuing and advancing what has been achieved in those two thousand years. And each of them is largely indebted for its outlook and procedure to the statements and hints of previous workers. McDougall, for instance, the leader of what is sometimes called the "Instinct School," owes a great deal to Aristotle, and so do a great many other contemporary psychologists.

IT is its experiments, then, that constitute psychology like any other science. And it is hoped that a description of a few of the more famous experiments will do something to dispel the ignorance that is only too evident in both the eulogies and the denunciations of the "new psychology" and, indeed, in the very use of the expression.

### Psychological Books for the Student

The following books are recommended by Dr. Anschutz for the student of the "new psychology.": Galton's "Enquiries into Human Faculty" (Everyman Series). (Typical nineteenth century observations on the most diverse subjects). Woodworth's "Psychology" (Methuen). (The best textbook). Woodworth's "Contemporary Schools of Psychology" (Methuen). (This will provide ample references for further reading in Freud, McDougall, Watson, Kohler and so on).

### Forthcoming W.E.A. Talks for 1YA

(a) Wednesday, August 16 and three following Wednesdays: "MODERN POETRY," by Rev. W. Jellie, B.A.

(1) America.
(2) Scotland.
(3) Ireland.
(4) Poetic Drama.

(b) Thursday, August 17 and three following Thursdays.

(1) "How It Strikes 'A Carpenter'"
(2) "Life on a Collier," by "A Seaman."
(3) "Lathe, File and Spanner," by "A Mechanic."
(4) "Trams, Travellers and Tramwaymen," by "A Motorman."

The idea of this series is that a number of people in various trades and occupations should give listeners a glimpse into their lives by describing the kind of thing they do every day, and how the world strikes them from the particular angle of their work. The speakers will, as far as possible, be men actually working at the jobs they are talking about.