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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson. GUSTAVUS WATTS CUNNINGHAM. New York: Longmans Green and Company. 1916. Pp. ix + 212.

Professor Cunningham's voice, as it sounds through the pages of *A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson*, is the voice of the Genteel Tradition in American philosophy. Suave in tone, lucid, grave, eloquent, accomplished, it laments the upgrowth of a generation of unscholarly thinkers; quotes Tennyson and T. H. Green; urges German philosophy on us before everything else; finds fault with James; takes Bergson to task and then sets him right, firmly, not unkindly, as a schoolmaster might some brilliant, but youthful and wayward, disciple. In the course of the book certain problems spring up; such problems as are likely to rise and to tower and ramify above a discussion of any particular point in philosophy whatsoever; nature of knowledge; appearance and reality; etc., etc. Professor Cunningham touches on these problems interestingly and significantly. But the center of gravity of his book is outside of any topical problem from the history of philosophy. Primarily he attempts, in his book, to draw certain inferences of constructive intent from the contradiction into which he discovers that the philosophy of Bergson has fallen. Competent critics are agreed that the philosophy of Bergson is stricken, and seriously stricken, with contradiction; but the constructions which they try to put on this contradiction are very diverse. Professor Cunningham's argument in the matter runs as follows:

Like Kant, through whom it is well that Bergson be approached

P 01247

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

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A SYMPHONIC STUDY

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NEW YORK
A STUDY



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

New York:
A Symphonic Study

In Three Parts

By
MELUSINA FAY PEIRCE

"And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of working and each in his separate star
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are."
—KIPLING.

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MELUSINA FAY PEIRCE

To
My Friend of Friends
because he was the friend
of this my book—its
pages are devotedly inscribed.

PART III.

THE DISCORD VS. THE CONCORD.

PART III.

THE DISCORD VS. THE CONCORD.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE WARD AND ELECTION DISTRICT SYSTEMS "MUST GO."

Is there then any peaceful policy that can lift the yoke of the Roman Bishop civilization from this our American Bible civilization which it is now so terrorizing and demoralizing and supplanting?

One peaceful remedy, and one alone, could lift it, and that is—Personal instead of Area Representation; otherwise the abolition of Wards in all towns and cities with the election at large of all Councilmen from the whole community,—and similarly the abolition of the Election Districts throughout all the States with the election at large from each State as a whole, of its State and of its Congressional Representatives and Senators.

"Just as the Angles, Saxons, and other Teutonic races who conquered Britain brought to their new homes their kinship, their village communities, and their settled framework of society with its own laws and customs and a certain rude representation in local affairs" so did their descendants a thousand years later bring to the North American coasts a similar "settled framework," and they founded it, as the first was founded, upon local representation.

The "town-meeting" of New England began with the compact of the men-pilgrims on the Mayflower and landed

with them and ever since.
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Thus the meeting
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with them and with all successive New England pioneers. For the first generation (1620-1664) only church members were allowed to vote; but thereafter the landholders of New England and of all the colonies south of her were the voters of their respective town-meetings, and when the needs and interests of any colony required mutual consultation and joint action, each town sent one or more of its responsible voters to represent it in the colonial council. In turn, the stress of the American Revolt from England caused these councils to send to the Continental Congress delegates representing each colony.

It was not until after the Revolution that men could become voters merely because they were twenty-one years old and had been a certain number of years in the country and of months in their voting district. During the formative period of American Institutions which now proves to have been our "great" period, voters were obliged to have property or income enough to show that they belonged to the class of "responsible" citizens. In those days men of so little value to the community that they paid no taxes were not trusted to vote away the money of those who did. Such a state of affairs as that of the City of Boston in 1906—when her whole Board of Aldermen paid all of them together only seven or eight hundred dollars in taxes, but voted upon a city expenditure of over forty millions,—would have been inconceivable.

Thus the original British suffrage represented land, or *area*, and the original American suffrage that sprang from it represented the same thing. A voter must be a landowner or a land tenant. Therefore it was not *men* that

were represented; it was *acres*. The "brotherhood" enthusiasm of Jean Jacques Rousseau, with which Jefferson so deeply sympathized, threw Jefferson's influence and that of his followers into making voters out of male citizens simply because they were men twenty-one years old. Moreover, after the Jeffersonian Party came into power, it needed voters to keep it there. Consequently as "men" only, male voters have ever since poured into our naturalization ranks.

Unhappily, the oversight was made that though men no longer needed to be property-owners in order to vote, they could after all only vote within the specified district in which at the time they were living, and only for a candidate domiciled in the same district. Whether voting for town or for state or for national legislature they were alike restricted to *an area*.

And from this political paradox and this alone, flows the tremendous degeneration and disappointment of American Politics. The "best" or standard American is not in politics. He is rarely elected to office. Very often he does not even vote. He can't be elected to any office except from the petty district in which he lives, and to ask it from or to companion with the foreign-born-and-fathered voters within whose gift it too often is, goes too much against the grain. Furthermore, he knows that if he did get into the town council or the state legislature he would meet there such a collection of limited spirits as representatives from their limited districts, that he could effect little for the worth-while things. And so the Hereditary American keeps out of politics and his country suffers "in the head and in the members" and

our "democratic" government

Doubtless the world is
but that it was too good
disappointment of the
the brilliant and generous
vard, later disappointed
brated "Pragmatic Philosopher"

our "democratic institutions" get the blame and the scorn!

Doubtless this writer would have blamed them too, but that it was her privilege many years ago to hear the disappointment explained and the remedy offered by the brilliant and profound Charles Sanders Peirce of Harvard, later distinguished as the originator of the celebrated "Pragmatic Philosophy."

CHAPTER XV.

A PHILOSOPHER'S POLITICAL DIAGNOSIS.

The period was that within five years after the Civil War, when, as already stated in Part I of this work, the two influential New York editors, E. L. Godkin, of the *Nation*, and George William Curtis, of *Harper's Weekly*, had begun their propaganda for Civil Service Reform after the British model as the sole possible salvation for American politics.

Mr. Peirce's comment upon their movement was as follows.

These fellows are on the wrong track. The radical trouble in American politics is not that men are appointed to office without due examination as to fitness, though I grant this to be an evil and that their demand for compulsory examinations for civil service offices ought to be conceded. But suppose these desired examinations established and all Civil Service aspirants obliged to pass them; the chief failure in modern American politics would not be remedied, and this is,—that *our best men are no longer attracted to or found either in Congress, in our State Legislatures, or in our town and city councils.*

In proportion we have as many able and high-minded men in the country as there were in the days of the Founders, but they don't and won't go into politics, and so politics are left to the inferior types among us,—to the petty Americans and to venal foreigners.

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And why? Because the working of the ward and district election-systems which we brought over from England bars our great men.

No man can be elected to Congress save from the congressional district wherein he resides. No man can be elected to a town or city council save from the ward wherein he resides. A man can not go independently before this whole State of Massachusetts, for instance, which sends ten men to the House of Representatives in Washington, and say to the voters: "Such and such are my national political principles. If one-tenth of the voters of the State are in sympathy with them, and from my life-record believe that I can adequately represent them, and will vote for me accordingly, then these principles of ours can be voiced on the floor of Congress."

Nor can a man's friends put him in independent nomination before all the voters of Massachusetts and say: "This candidate stands for principles which are also our principles, and such and such is his record in his community for character and ability. Will one-tenth of you help us elect him? If you will, we shall then be worthily represented in Washington."

No, (continued Mr. Peirce) let a man's principles, character and achievement be what they may, he can only be nominated and voted into legislative office *in his own residence-district*, and if to all his other qualifications he can not add *personal popularity* with the Toms and Dicks and Pats and Mikes of that district, he can not be elected.

And suppose he *is* elected. His term is but for two years, and while he is serving in Congress some man in his district is ceaselessly wire-pulling to supplant him, so that he can feel little or no security or satisfaction in his legislative position.

Since, then, it is the "personal equation" and *not* a man's merit or his talent that decides his political fate, respected and self-respecting Americans—men able and accustomed to command success in other directions chiefly on their talents

and merits, will not demean themselves to this condition. The result is, as I said before, that our best men are not in politics, and what is a still worse betrayal of our institutions, a large proportion of our citizens are as perpetually deprived of representation as if they had no legal vote at all.

Massachusetts illustrates this in the most glaring manner—for our ten representatives in Congress are perpetually Republican—yet only six-tenths of our voters are Republicans.* Three-tenths are Democrats and one-tenth are, so to speak, Eccentrics; that is, they are the extremists and the faddists who would properly be represented by Wendell Phillips, the most golden and brilliant orator in the nation to-day. Yet Wendell Phillips could neither be elected from his own city of Boston nor from any other congressional district in Massachusetts, because the Republicans hold the balance of power in all the districts, and they don't want him. But if our Congressmen were elected at large from the whole State, Phillips would go in every time.

True that, being an extremist, he would probably carry no measures that he introduced; but he would undoubtedly modify many measures, and anyhow he ought to be in Congress because one-tenth of the voters of his State prefer him to any other man, and besides, he would add such brilliancy to its debates that equally for the glory and prestige of the nation he ought to be there.

Yet this splendid genius is perpetually debarred from his natural sphere in Washington because of this most unfortunate Election-district System!

Of course our State Legislatures suffer similarly from the same system, and so do our town, and city councils from our Ward System. The best and ablest city voters usually reside near each other in one or more wards. The other wards contain comparatively few men fitted by training and experience to cope with the legislative and administrative

* In 1905, nearly forty years after the date of the above conversation, though the Democrats of the great State of Illinois numbered 500,000—they had only one representative in Congress!

problems, and the public growth ward problems were expected.

"What there is ~~the~~..."

The very simple plan of electing the town and city officers, and letting every man vote for his town aldermen, town officers and representatives and Senators for the State he prefers, seems to me, providentially, better than any part of the Constitution of any State can improve upon. As I said before, Massachusetts sends five are elected each year, and one vote for a representative of the five men highest in the town, and men elected.

Of course, the organization would be expected to vote after the 1980 election as depositors in the State, so that the vote could be stored in that is a standard measure Congress in several weeks.

As for the present situation,
Thomas Hart, who was with

problems of a corporation organized and existing solely for the public good; consequently our cities are run by mere ward politicians and the results are precisely what might be expected.

"What then is the remedy?" Mr. Peirce was asked.

The very simplest thing in all the world: Simply abolish the town and city Wards and legislative Election-districts, and let every voter cast one vote (as he does now) for his town alderman, but let him cast it for whatever candidate within the town limits he prefers; and similarly for his State Representative and Senator and for his Congressional Representative and Senator; let him vote for any men in the State he prefers,—one for each office. Very fortunately,—providentially, rather—the Ward and District Systems *are not a part of the Constitution of the United States*, and therefore any State can abrogate them for itself at any time. As I said before, Massachusetts sends ten men to Congress. If five are elected each year, let every voter in the State have one vote for a representative in the lower House and let the five men highest on the list after the votes are counted be the men elected.

Of course, to prevent the massing and thereby throwing away of votes on extremely popular candidates, some organization would be required. On election day, for instance, voting after the first two hours could be suspended until the vote as deposited could be counted and telegraphed over the State, so that voting for any man who has received his quota could be stopped. If the process took longer than one day, that is as nothing compared with the importance of electing standard men—our best men—to our State Legislatures and to Congress. In England a Parliamentary election may take several weeks.

As for the proposed electoral reform of the Englishman, Thomas Hare, which would allow voters to vote each for

first, second, third, and fourth choices—so that every man's vote would be sure to be counted for somebody,—it is altogether too cumbersome and complicated for our huge and heterogeneous constituencies. Mr. Hare is so anxious to have an absolutely perfect representation—a representation wherein each and every individual voter shall be represented by *some* one, that he has fatally handicapped his own reform. His plan is not practical.

But give every man one vote for the one man he prefers out of all the candidates offering themselves or nominated by their friends, and on the common sense principle that no man will throw away his vote upon a "nobody" who can't be elected when he has the chance to throw it for a "somebody" who can,—we would soon find our very best men in our town councils, in our State Legislatures, and in our National Congress; and moreover, such men would be as eager to serve the public in such positions as now they are determined to keep out of them.

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