

The principle of land value taxation is making great progress in different parts of the world, notably in Germany, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Last year the city of Vancouver adopted the single tax system of raising its civic revenues, and the results have been good in every way.

We have only to extend a principle already recognized and we shall evolve a system of taxation which will be just to all members of the community and which will bring undreamed of blessings in its train.

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## BOOKS

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### PRAGMATISM.\*

**Pragmatism and Its Critics.** By Addison Webster Moore, Ph. D., Professor of Philosophy in the University of Chicago. Published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Asked by a subscriber "to define pragmatism in words of one syllable," the *New York Independent* did its little best in this fashion:

The only way to find out if a thing is true is to try it and see how it works. If it works well for a long time and for all folks, it must have some truth in it. If it works wrong it is false, at least in part. If there is no way to test it, then it has no sense. It means naught to us if we cannot tell what odds it makes if we hold to it or not. A creed is just a guide to life. We must live to learn. If a man would know what is right he must try to do what is right. Then he can find out. Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. The will to have faith in a thing oft makes the faith come true. So it can be said in a way that we make truth for our own use. What we think, must be of use to us in some way; else why should we think it? The truth is what is good for us, what helps us, what gives us joy and peace, what shows us how to act, what ties up, fact to fact, so the chain will hold, what makes us see all things clear and straight and what keeps us from stray paths that turn out wrong in the end.

That certainly has the look and sound of pragmatism, save the short words; but we doubt if Professor Moore would accept it as a definition. He might welcome it, however, as a sample of what the critics of pragmatism are trying to say. A definition of pragmatism seems indeed to be impossible. As may be gathered from an observation at page 129 of this book, pragmatism is incomplete except in its denial of absolutism. Like Senator Ingalls's conception of a Kansas day, perhaps it is "something that cannot be described, but once seen can never be forgotten."

We haven't the space for a review of this collection of scholarly essays, as from a scholar in phil-

osophy; and though we had the space, the scholarship would be lacking. But the more familiar pragmatism becomes, if one may presume to think of pragmatism as familiar to anybody even in degree, the stronger there grows an impression of the subject which has a pleasing prospect. Possibly the pragmatists are trying either to drive common sense into technical philosophy, or to find common sense there if there is any. Were we sure we might do so without giving offense where none is intended, we should be inclined to say that technical philosophy, having been a good deal of an ass all down the centuries, is beginning to find it out, and that pragmatism is making a cryptic record of the fact.

In Professor Moore's book, pragmatism appears to stand out so frequently as the antithesis of absolutism that the technical controversy between pragmatists and absolutists takes on the color of age. It suggests that old "shindy" of the Greek philosophers, which confronts and bothers students of technical philosophy at their first plunge—the quarrel over the question of "being" or "becoming" as the principle of the universe. Is the universe fixed or in flux? Is it perennially changing or forever unchangeable? Is it absolute from everlasting unto everlasting, or do we pragmatize it as we go along?

In one phrase or another this has always been the issue in technical philosophy, always the substance of the elementary quarrels of the schools. At least it would seem so to unscholarly observers of the battle fields of professional philosophers. Whether the universe is in perpetual flux or not, there would seem to have been, in the issues of philosophical warfare, much constancy except as to terms. Terms have been as elusive in the history of technical philosophy as the three cards of a monte man at a county fair. And now, unless we are still very much at sea about the matter, the battles of the ancient Greek philosophers are again raging in newest environments and with newest terms.

Through the lenses of Professor Moore's book, at any rate, things look very much as if the static doctrine of "being" were again in collision with the dynamic doctrine of "becoming," in a struggle between absolutists and pragmatists. But there does seem to be a hopeful difference. Possibly pragmatism is not setting up the doctrine of "becoming" in irreconcilable opposition to the doctrine of "being"—the dynamic against the static—but is making itself the ligament of thought necessary to unite the two in the ultimate relationship of Siamese twins. Instead of an enemy with banners, pragmatism may be bearing a flag of truce to absolutism, with rough notes for a permanent treaty of peace in this age-old war of the schools.

With whatever set of names the votaries of phil-

\*See review of William James's "Pragmatism" in *The Public*, volume x, page 1650.

osophy seem, from time to time, to have quarreled over the issue of "being" or "becoming," they might have come to a better understanding by considering the principle of "being" and "becoming." This solution was put forth by Emanuel Swedenborg a hundred and fifty years ago, but as he gave it a theological and mystical environment, instead of launching another school of technical philosophy, the professional philosophers have ignored his solution. It is to his "esse" and "existere" as essential qualities of the Creator that we allude, "esse" being unchanging principle and "existere" its ever-changing manifestations. Translating "esse" into the "being" of the old philosophers, and "existere" into "becoming," "being" would be the vital principle of the universe from which "becoming" proceeds and by which it is maintained. Translating them into terms of the present philosophical controversy, absolutism would be belief in unchangeable principle, and the opposite of absolutism would be belief in ever changing experience. To deny either belief without reservation, is to get lost in a dialectical maze. It is very much as in another field of thought it would be to deny either induction or deduction without reserve, or in the field of physical science to argue unreservedly against either centrifugal or centripetal tendencies. But to recognize "being" and "becoming," "esse" and "existere," the "absolute" and the "experiential," as two inseparable qualities of the universe, is to find the key to a real and useful philosophy.

We strongly suspect Professor Moore of having caught a glimpse at least of that key. It may be that this suspicion is slanderous or flattering according to the point of view, but he certainly seems to have a notion of a rational evolution which derives its impulse from a rational absolutism. He must not be lightly understood as implying that there are no laws of evolution, no principles of growth, no dependable regularity, no something or other that governs the processes whereby means are adapted to ends and a universe works. To argue for a dynamic universe is not necessarily to deny principles of motion; to argue that we ourselves make the universe, does not necessarily imply that there are no constant laws governing the making process; to show that phenomena are ceaseless in change and infinite in variety, is not to prove that there are no impulses, or that these are irregular; to exhibit a flying machine in action is not to disprove the constant force we call "the law of gravitation," but rather is to confirm the fact and character of that force. And so of moral force, our vague and altering apprehensions of which we call ethics. Thinking otherwise would come pretty close to ruling out reason. How could experience be a guide for progressive conduct, if there were no dependable principles of progress?

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## PERIODICALS

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### Brand Whitlock's Detective Story.

How Alderman Byrnes was tempted and fell, is the latest, and one of the best of Brand Whitlock's short stories. It is timely, too; and significant. The Saturday Evening Post of May 27th prints it.

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### Railway Favors to Trusts.

If anybody tells you that trusts are not anchored somewhere in special privilege, refer him to Richard Washburn Child's article in Everybody's for June, entitled "The Open Bung-hole in the Railway Barrel." And having posted yourself on that point you will find it worth while to read in the same Everybody's "The Passing of the War God" and Professor Ross's story of "Young China at School."

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### Farming by Special Train.

The Outlook for April 22, tells how popular and effective among the farmers are the agricultural colleges on wheels. Through Iowa Professor Holden runs his seed-corn special, teaching to the crowds at every way station the value and method of testing their seed corn before planting. After him come the oat and hog and domestic science specials, and farmer and railroad and wealth computer all enthusiastically say "it pays."

A. L. G.

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### "Life and Labor."

This organ of the Women's Trade Union League, published at Chicago under the editorship of Alice Henry, contains in the June number an explanation of Insurgency by Frederic C. Howe, an appreciation of Tom L. Johnson by Louis F. Post, an account of the woman suffrage party by May Gray Peck, a story by Octavia Roberts and an interesting variety of other matter. Margaret Dreier Robins begins an especially valuable series on parliamentary procedure, in common sense style, and under the common sense title of "How to Take Part in Meetings."

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### Catching the Spirit.

Previous numbers of Life and Labor have been deepening the conviction that it is a true spokesman for the Women's Trade Union movement—the May issue for example. The horrible Triangle Shop Fire in New York had to be told of, and the sickening conditions in the pearl-button industry lockout in Iowa; yet the reader was left with a share of that alert hope always animating the Women's Trade Union League and its leaders. Perhaps it was Alice Henry's sketch of Mrs. Winifred O'Reilly to whose strength and goodness the portrait drawn by Charlotte O. Schetter bore further witness. Perhaps it was Andersen's sweet old story of "The Ugly Duckling" reprinted and illustrated. Whatever it may be the magazine is never dull nor disheartening, but youthfully vigorous like its sponsors.

A. L. G.