Huxleyan Overview

Essays of a Humanist. Sir Julian Huxley, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, 288 pp. $4.95.

Nineteen other books by Sir Julian Huxley are listed opposite the title page of this volume of essays. One finds with astonishment that several have been omitted, among them two—*Problems of Relative Growth* and *Elements of Experimental Embryology* (with Sir Gavin DeBeer)—that shaped the minds of a whole generation of biologists (and provided the plots for several of Aldous Huxley's novels). Monographic papers, even those superb ones that helped to found the science of ethology, are of course not considered *books*. So the list of 19, now become 20, contains only *popular* books, and evidently (since at least one Penguin title is missing) only those published in the United States. Not a small achievement, one thinks, even for one of the writing Huxleys. But Sir Julian's extraordinary productivity is a by-product of his busy career, as researcher, teacher, administrator, and statesman. Can he maintain this literary output, writing as he must on trains and planes, and still have anything new or interesting to say?

The answer is that he can. Not really new, maybe, but certainly interesting. Several of these essays are concerned with *evolutionary humanism*, a rational and optimistic religion that deserves a less hackneyed title. It is a characteristically Huxleyan form of deism that Sir Julian developed more systematically in the Gifford Lectures. Like others of his family, he occupies a pulpit as warily as Emerson ever did, but the theology is nevertheless argued with cogency and skill, especially in the chapters dealing with its application to education and to eugenics. A curiously ambivalent attitude toward theologians is most apparent in his introduction to Père Teilhard's *Phenomenon of Man*, which seems out of place in this context. It cannot have been an easy book for anyone, least of all a deist, to introduce, and perhaps the result is to be read more as a tribute to the memory of a great but tormented man with a genius for friendship than as an espousal of his philosophy. What is most refreshing, and makes these essays very different from sermons, is the recognition that theology is a game, a non-zero-sum game at that, which is much too important to be left to theologians.

There is much besides theology in this book. In his youth, Sir Julian was one of the most perceptive bird-watchers of his time, and a lifetime of committee work has not diminished his stature as an ethologist. The essay "Psychometabolism," addressed originally to psychiatrists, displays the breadth of his reading as well as his own naturalist's eye, and is by no means the paraphrase of Lorenz and Tinbergen that might have been expected. "Riches of wild Africa," a judicious and optimistic assessment of a challenging ecological problem, manages to avoid the cant of the professional preservationist while pleading eloquently for Africa's national parks. "The Coto Doñana," a delightful account of birdwatching in the Spanish Marismas, indicates that Europe, too, still has wildlife worth preserving. Two chapters treat of population problems, one of them in the fresh perspective provided by little-known French and English predecessors of Malthus.

As a writer and as a scientist, Sir Julian Huxley is incapable of dullness, and his latest volume of essays is cordially recommended.

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Academic Geography

Geography Now and Then. Some notes on the history of academic geography in the United States. William Warntz. American Geographical Society, New York, 1964. xii + 162 pp. Illus. $4.

This lively and informative survey of the episodic career of geography in American universities and colleges should interest geographers most, but also some historians of science and some administrators. The career of geography has been like a jack-in-the-box in our Ivy League colleges—now you see it, and now you don't. Why?

Warntz surveys this problem historically. Geography held an exalted position in the earliest colonial colleges; it was relegated to the grammar schools in the early days of the Republic; revived in post-Civil War time, but showed strong tendencies toward weakening again around 1900; and survived to go on to a period of explosive growth everywhere except in the Ivy League where it is still in decline.

Warntz's analysis makes clear that the colonial period of growth was when geography was a systematic field with the globe as its object and mathematics and astronomy its close allies. It was reduced to primary school level when, lacking any unifying theory, it degenerated into mere place geography. The revival depended on a return to broader outlooks, first teleological and later Darwinian determinist. After World War I, crude environmental determinism came under attack, and there was a dangerous movement back toward mere cataloging—the so-called regionalist school so strongly developed in the Middle Western colleges. This was saved from aridity by its intense bent toward practicality. After World War II there appeared a strong drive toward systematic work. Cartography, geomorphology, climatology, and plant geography, all at one time almost extinct in academic geography departments, were strengthened, and some departments (for example, at Johns Hopkins) went frankly and fully into systematic studies. Warntz's own work is strongly mathematical, and this represents a still later and presently very strong current of development. There are also persistent stirrings in the direction of establishing the geography of man on a nonteleological, nonphysical, deterministic, but on a strongly cultural historical process base, that may yet give unity to this part of the field.

Warntz's little book, with its rediscovery of the colonial cycle of college geography and its interesting portrayal of the background of rise and fall of the subject, is bound to have a mighty influence on American geography. It should also interest many in other fields.

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Pharmacology

Lipid Pharmacology. Rodolfo Paoletti, Ed. Academic Press, New York, 1964. xiv + 538 pp. Illus. $17.50.

Lipid pharmacology has to do, mainly, with the effects of drugs on the lipids of the body. Lipid metabolism is