

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
NATIONS

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE
PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

BY

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PREFACE

This book contains two closely related studies of the consciousness of nations. It has been written during the closing months of the war and in the days that have followed, and is completed while the Peace Conference is still in session, holding in the balance, as many believe, the fate of many hopes, and perhaps the whole future of the world. We see focussed there in Paris all the motives that have ever entered into human history and all the ideals that have

influenced
human affairs. The question must have arisen in all
minds in, some
form as to what the place of these motives and ideals
and dramatic
moments is in the progress of the world. Is the world
governed after
all by the laws of nature in all its progress? Do ideals
and motives
govern the world, but only as these ideals and motives
are themselves
produced according to biological or psychological
principles? Or,
again, does progress depend upon historical moments,
upon conscious
purposes which may divert the course of nature and in a
real sense
create the future? It is with the whole problem of
history that we are
confronted in these practical hours. At heart our
problem is that of
the place of man in nature as a conscious factor of
progress. This is
a problem, finally, of the philosophy of history, but it
is rather in
a more concrete way and upon a different level that it
is to be
considered here,--and somewhat incidentally to other
more specific
questions. But this is the problem that is always before
us, and the
one to which this study aims to make some contribution,
however small.

The first part of the book is a study of the motives of
war. It is an
analysis of the motives of war in the light of the
general principles
of the development of society. We wish to see what the
causes of past
wars have been, but we wish also to know what these
motives are as
they may exist as forces in the present state of
society. In such a
study, practical questions can never be far away. We can

no longer
study war as an abstract psychological problem, since
war has brought
us to a horrifying and humiliating situation. We have
discovered that
our modern world, with all its boasted morality and
civilization, is
actuated, at least in its relations among nations, by
very unsocial
motives. We live in a world in which nations thus far
have been for
the most part dominated by a theory of States as
absolutely sovereign
and independent of one another. Now it becomes evident
that a logical
consequence of that theory of States is absolute war. A
prospect of a
future of absolute war in a world in which industrial
advances have
placed in the hands of men such terrible forces of
destruction, an
absolute warfare that can now be carried into the air
and under the
sea is what makes any investigation of the motives of
war now a very
practical problem.

If the urgency of our situation drives us to such
studies and makes us
hasten to apply even an immature sociology and
psychology, it ought
not to prejudice our minds and make us, for example,
fall into the
error of wanting peace at any price--an ideal which, as
a practical
national philosophy, might be even worse than a spirit
of militarism.
What we need to know, finally, in order to avoid these
errors which at
least we may imagine, is what, in the most fundamental
way, progress
may be conceived to be. If we could discover that, and
set our minds
to the task of making the social life progressive, we
might be willing

to let wars take care of themselves, so to speak, without any radical philosophy of good and evil. We ought at least to examine war fairly, and to see what, in the waging of war, man has really desired. A study of war ought to help us to decide whether we must accept our future, with its possibility of wars, as a kind of fate, or whether we must now begin, with a new idea of conscious evolution, to apply our science and our philosophy and our practical wisdom seriously for the first time to the work of creating history, and no longer be content merely to live it.

As to the details of the study of war--we first of all consider the origin and the biological aspects of war; then war as related to the development, in the social life and in the life of the individual, of the motive of power. The instincts that are most concerned in the development of this motive of power are then considered, and also the relations of war to the æsthetic impulses and to art. Nationalism, national honor and patriotism are studied as causes of war. The various "causes" that are brought forward as the principles fought for are examined; also the philosophical influences, the moral and religious motives and the institutional factors among the motives of war. Finally the economic and political motives and the historical causes are considered. The conclusion is reached that the motive of power, as the fundamental principle of behavior at the higher levels, is the principle of war, but that in so general a form

it goes but a little way toward being an explanation of war. We find the real causes of war by tracing out the development of this motive of power as it appears in what we call the "intoxication impulse," and in the idea of national honor and in the political motives of war. It is in these aspects of national life that we find the motives of war as they may be considered as a practical problem. But we find no separate causes, and we do not find a chain of causes that might be broken somewhere and thus war be once for all eliminated. Wars are products of the whole character of nations, so to speak, and it is national character that must be considered in any practical study of war. It is by the development of the character of nations in a natural process, or by the education of national character, that war will be made to give way to perpetual peace, if such a state ever comes, rather than by a political readjustment or by legal enactments, however necessary as beginnings or makeshifts these legal and political changes may be.

The second part of the book is a study of our present situation as an educational problem, in which we have for the first time a problem of educating national consciousness as a whole, or the individuals of a nation with reference to a world-consciousness. The study has reference especially to the conditions in our own country, but it also has general significance. The war has brought many changes, and in every phase of life we see new problems. These may seem

at the moment
to be separate and detached conditions which must be
dealt with, each
by itself, but this is not so; they are all aspects of
fundamental
changes and new conditions, the main feature of which is
the new
world-consciousness of which we speak. Whatever one's
occupation, one
cannot remain unaffected by these changes, or escape
entirely the
stress that the need of adjustment to new ideas and new
conditions
compels. What we may think about the future--about what
can be done
and what ought to be done, is in part, and perhaps
largely, a matter
of temperament. At least we see men, presumably having
access to the
same facts, drawing from them very different
conclusions. Some are
keyed to high expectations; they look for revolutions,
mutations, a
new era in politics and everywhere in the social life.
For them, after
the war, the world is to be a new world. Fate will make
a new deal.
Others appear to believe that after the flurry is over
we shall settle
down to something very much like the old order. These
are conservative
people, who neither desire nor expect great changes.
Others take a
more moderate course. While improvement is their great
word, they are
inclined to believe that the new order will grow step by
step out of
the old, and that good will come out of the evil only in
so far as we
strive to make it. We shall advance along the old lines
of progress,
but faster, perhaps, and with life attuned to a higher
note.

The writer of this book must confess that he belongs in

a general way
to the third species of these prophets. There is a
natural order of
progress, but the good must, we may suppose, also be
worked for step
by step. The war will have placed in our hands no golden
gift of a new
society; both the ways and the direction of progress
must be sought
and determined by ideals. The point of view in regard to
progress, at
least as a working hypothesis, becomes an educational
one, in a broad
sense. Our future we must make. We shall not make it by
politics. The
institutions with which politics deals are dangerous
cards to play.
There is too much convention clinging to them, and they
are too
closely related to all the supports of the social order.
The
industrial system, the laws, the institutions of
property and rights,
the form of government, we change at our own risk.
Naturally many
radical minds look to the abrupt alteration of these
fundamental
institutions for the cure of existing evils, and others
look there
furtively for the signs of coming revolution, and the
destruction of
all we have gained thus far by civilization. But at a
different level,
where life is more plastic--in the lives of the young,
and in the vast
unshaped forms of the common life everywhere, all this
is different.
We do not expect abrupt changes here nor quick and
visible results.
Experimentation is still possible and comparatively
safe. There is no
one institution of this common and unformed life, not
even the school
itself, that supports the existing structures, so that
if we move it

in the wrong way, everything else will fall. When we see we are wrong, there is still time to correct our mistakes.

Our task, then, is to see what the forces are that have brought us to where we stand now, and to what influences they are to be subjected, if they are to carry us onward and upward in our course. Precisely what the changes in government or anywhere in the social order should be is not the chief interest, from this point of view. The details of the constitution of an international league, the practical adjustments to be made in the fields of labor, and in the commerce of nations, belong to a different order of problems. We wish rather to see what the main currents of life, especially in our own national life, are, and what in the most general way we are to think and do, if the present generation is to make the most of its opportunities as a factor in the work of conscious evolution.

The bibliography shows the main sources of the facts and the theories that have been drawn upon in writing the book. Some of the chapters have been read in a little different form as lectures before President G. Stanley Hall's seminar at Clark University. More or less of repetition, made necessary in order to make these papers, which were read at considerable intervals, independent of one another, has been allowed to remain. Perhaps in the printed form this reiteration will help to emphasize the general psychological basis of the study.

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PART I

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE MOTIVES OF WAR

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF NATIONS

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

CHAPTER I

ORIGINS AND BIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The simplest possible interpretation of the causes of war that might be offered is that war is a natural relation between original herds or groups of men, inspired by the predatory instinct or by some other instinct of the herd. To explain war, then, one need only refer to this instinct as final, or at most account for the origin and genesis of the instinct in question in the animal world. Some writers express this very view, calling war an expression of an instinct

or of several instincts; others find different or more complex beginnings of war.

Nusbaum (86) says that both offense and defense are based upon an expansion impulse. Nicolai (79) sees the beginning of war in individual predatory acts, involving violence and the need of defense. Again we find the migratory instinct, the instinct that has led groups of men to move and thus to interfere with one another, regarded as the cause of war, or as an important factor in the causes. Sometimes a purely physiological or growth impulse is invoked, or vaguely the inability of primitive groups to adapt themselves to conditions, or to gain access to the necessities of life. Le Bon (42) speaks of the hunger and the desire that led Germanic forces as ancient hordes to turn themselves loose upon the world.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of the nature of the impulses or instincts which actuated the conduct of men originally and brought them into opposition, as groups, to one another, we do find at least some suggestion of a working hypothesis in these simple explanations of war. Granted the existence of groups formed by the accident of birth and based upon the most primitive protective and economic associations, and assuming the presence of the emotions of anger and fear or any instinct which is expressed as an impulse or habit of the group, we might say that the conditions and factors for the beginning of warfare are all present. When groups

have desires
that can best and most simply be satisfied by the
exertion of force
upon other groups, something equivalent to war has
begun.

If we take the group (as herd or pack) and the instinct
as the
original factors or data of society, however, we
probably simplify the
situation too much. The question arises whether the
motives are not
more complex, even from the beginning, and whether both
the tendencies
or impulses by which the group was formed or held
together and the
motives behind aggressive conduct against other groups
have not been
produced or developed in the course of social relations,
rather than
have been brought up from animal life, or at any point
introduced as
instincts. We notice at least that animals living in
groups do not in
general become aggressive within the species. Possibly
it was by some
peculiarity of man's social existence, or his superior
endowment of
intelligence or some unusual quality of his instincts,
perhaps very
far back in animal life, that has in the end made him a
warlike
creature. Man does seem to be a creature of feelings
rather than of
instincts as far back as we find much account of him,
and to be
characterized rather by the weakness and variability of
his instincts
than by their definiteness. It is quite likely, too,
that man never
was at any stage a herd animal; in fact it seems certain
that he was
not, and that his instincts were formed long before he
began to live
in large groups at all. So he never acquired the

mechanisms either for aggression or defense that some creatures have. Apparently he inherited neither the physical powers nor the warlike spirit nor the aggressive and predatory instincts that would have been necessary to make of him a natural fighting animal; but rather, perhaps, he has acquired his warlike habits, so to speak, since arriving at man's estate. Endowed with certain tendencies which express themselves with considerable variability in the processes by which the functions of sex and nutrition are carried out, man never acquired the definiteness of character and conduct that some animals have. He learned more from animals, it may be, than he inherited from them, and it is quite likely that far back in his animal ancestry he had greater flexibility or adaptability than other animals. The aggressive instinct, the herd instinct, the predatory instinct, the social instinct, the migratory instinct, may never have been carried very far in the stock from which man came. All this, however, at this point is only a suggestion of two somewhat divergent points of view in regarding the primitive activities of man from which his long history of war-making has taken rise.

The view is widely held and continually referred to by many writers on war and politics, that the most fundamental of all causes of war, or the most general principle of it, is the principle of selection--that war is a natural struggle between groups, especially between races,

the fittest in this struggle tending to survive. This view needs to be examined sharply, as indeed it has been by several writers, in connection with the present war. This biological theory or apology of war appears in several forms, as applied to-day. They say that racial stocks contend with one another for existence, and with this goes the belief that nations fight for life, and that defeat in war tends towards the extermination of nations. The Germans, we often hear, were fighting for national existence, and the issue was to be a judgment upon the fitness of their race to survive. This view is very often expressed. O'Ryan and Anderson (5), military writers, for example, say that the same aggressive motives prevail as always in warfare: nations struggle for survival, and this struggle for survival must now and again break out into war. Powers (75) says that nations seldom fight for anything less than existence. Again (15) we read that conflicts have their roots in history, in the lives of peoples, and the sounder, and better, emerge as victors. There is a selective process on the part of nature that applies to nations; they say that especially increase of population forces upon groups an endless conflict, so that absolute hostility is a law of nature in the world.

These views contain at least two very doubtful assumptions. One is that nations do actually fight for existence,--that warfare is thus selective to the point of eliminating races. The other is that in warlike conflicts the victors are the superior peoples,

the better
fitted for survival. Confusion arises and the discussion
is
complicated by the fact that conflicts of men as groups
of individuals
within the same species are somewhat anomalous among
biological forms
of struggle. Commonly, struggle takes place among
individuals,
organisms having definite characteristics and but
slightly variable
each from its own kind contending with one another, by
direct
competition or through adaptation, in the first case
individuals
striving to obtain actually the same objects. Or, again,
species
having the same relations to one another that
individuals have,
contend in a similar manner.

Primitive groups of men, however, are not so definite;
they are not
biological entities in any such sense as individuals and
species are.
They are not definitely brought into conflict with one
another, in
general, as contending for the same objects, and it is
difficult to
see how, in the beginning, at least, economic pressure
has been a
factor at all in their relations. Whatever may have been
the motive
that for the most part was at work in primitive warfare,
it is not at
all evident that superior groups had any survival
value. The groups
that contended with one another presumably differed most
conspicuously
in the size of the group, and this was determined
largely by chance
conditions. Other differences must have been quite
subordinate to
this, and have had little selective value. The
conclusion is that the

struggle of these groups with one another is not essentially a biological phenomenon.

The fact is that peace rather than war, taking the history of the human race as a whole, is the condition in which selection of the fittest is most active, for it is the power of adaptation to the conditions of stable life, which are fairly uniform for different groups over wide areas, that tests vitality and survival values, so far as these values are biological. It may be claimed that war is very often, if not generally, a means of interrupting favorable selective processes, the unfit tending to prevail temporarily by force of numbers, or even because of qualities that antagonize biological progress. Viewing war in its later aspects, we can see that it is often when nations are failing in natural competition that they resort to the expedient of war to compensate for this loss, although they do not usually succeed thereby in improving their economic condition as they hope, or increase their chance of survival, or even demonstrate their survival value. It is notorious that nations that conquer tend to spend their vitality in conquest and introduce various factors of deterioration into their lives. The inference is that a much more complex relation exists among groups than the biological hypothesis allows. Survival value indeed, as applied to men in groups, is not a very clear concept. There may be several different criteria of survival value, not comparable in any quantitative way

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