

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE APPEAL TO REASON.¹

THE commanding problem of the day is the problem of human nature. Within this problem lies the central problem of the *control* of human action; and within this lies the innermost problem of the relation between the intellectual part of man and his impelling interests. Modern occidental thought seems so to have shaped itself that the profoundest issues hinge upon the solution of these concentric problems.

In the field of the practical arts we have learned to regard *man* both as the material with which we build and the force with which we work. What is the texture and plasticity of this material, and how shall this force be applied and regulated? Industry is seen to be, like politics and education, an art of management, a skilful adjustment of conscious life. New vocations, new forms of expertness, have come into being, dealing with welfare, morale, conciliation, publicity and propaganda. And the knowledge which is the prerequisite to skill in these forms of activity is the knowledge of human nature. We are said to stand at the beginning of an age in which the applications of psychology shall eclipse even the spectacular applications of physics and chemistry.

If we turn from the practical arts to our standards of criticism, here again, despite ancient and persistent doctrinal differences, the appeal is to human nature. A priori and authoritarian standards do not suit the spirit of the age. The teachings of religion are proved in the human religious experience. Beauty

¹ Read as the president's address at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association [Eastern Division] at Columbia University, December 29, 1920.