

Book Reviews

L. S. HEARNshaw, *The shaping of modern psychology. An historical introduction*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, 8vo, pp. viii, 421, £19.95.

It is not uncommon for emeritus professors to take a more reflective view of their discipline, or even for them to grapple with the significance of their specialist knowledge for perennial human questions. Leslie Hearnshaw, for many years Professor of Psychology at Liverpool, is better equipped than many for this role, having already written a history of British psychology and the standard biography of Cyril Burt. In this book, he responds strongly to those he sees as jeopardizing an ancient humanist project of psychological knowledge: over-specialized professional psychologists, historians indifferent to present scientific psychology, and critics of the whole progressivist enterprise. The result is an extraordinarily wide-ranging study—very definitely a conscious act of unification—to portray “psychology” as a coherent and progressive endeavour, whatever its problematic qualities as science. His story begins with the animism of early cultures, and it runs through the Greeks to the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the grounding of modern psychology in biology, philosophy, and the German universities in the nineteenth century. There is a separate chapter on “medical influences”, arguing that it is only with the generation of James and Ribot that there is any significant medical psychology. He also attempts to do justice to “the social dimension”; and few other histories of psychology have had the breadth to assimilate Marx or Parsons. With the twentieth century, Hearnshaw stresses clearly the “shaping” power of the occupational organization and application of psychology, as well as the theoretical and methodological issues which usually dominate such general accounts. In the final chapters, he shows that recent psychology has not been so specialized that it has avoided shaping by philosophical critiques, and he then boldly reviews “the state of the art”, focusing on the neurosciences and the “cognitive revolution”. In conclusion, he ventures his own candidate for a unifying “metapsychology”, based on William Stern’s “personalism”.

This is an extraordinary journey, and niggles about detail are out of place, though some passing judgments make one blench. Ultimately, I feel, the book is a declaration of faith. Certainly, it does not engage with the deep difficulties, philosophical and historical, of the enterprise; the key values of continuity, progress, and the striving intellect give the book its form and are not themselves the subject of reflection. As a result the material up till the twentieth century is much less interesting (and in my view less defensible) than what follows, since it becomes a summary of the history of ideas constantly evaluated by a criterion of progress. There is little historical understanding to be gained from this. For a non-psychologist, however, the account of the shaping of twentieth-century psychology has an attractive breadth and openness to the ways psychology as an occupation integrates with psychology as knowledge. These later chapters may prove a stimulating read to anyone impatient with specialization. Unlike many other books with similar titles, this is not a textbook, but a much more strongly personal interpretation.

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MICHAEL B. KATZ, *In the shadow of the poorhouse: a social history of welfare in America*, New York, Basic Books; London, Harper & Row, 1986, 8vo, pp. xiv, 338, \$24.95/£22.95.

Michael B. Katz has written a useful synthesis of the history of the provision of cash and social (not health) services to the urban poor in the United States. His book is a reliable summary of leading secondary sources that is augmented by impressive reading in published primary sources and a sampling of manuscripts.

Katz has four central themes, three of which are important, if unoriginal, generalizations about American social policy. He emphasizes that “social insurance and public assistance has bifurcated along class lines” (p. ix), that local variation has characterized the provision of cash and services, and that “governments accomplish many public purposes through private agents” (p. x). His fourth theme, that the “American welfare state is incomplete” (p. x)—that it is a

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“semi-welfare state” (p. 291)—reflects his historicist bias that events should unfold toward goals set by historians. To Katz, Western Europe provides models of “complete welfare states”.

Like most ambitious books, this one has flaws. The first four chapters are mainly about a few communities in Eastern states, rather than about America. Because he excludes health services (except public mental hospitals) from his study, he ignores the difficult question of how institutions treated the sick poor. His strong distaste for charity “reformers” leads him to ignore evidence that, after the turn of the century, some of them—Edward T. Devine, for example—were collectivists boring from within established agencies (p. 83). In his brief summary of public health work at the turn of the century, he uncritically (and uncharacteristically) accepts contemporary claims for its effectiveness in reducing mortality from tuberculosis and other diseases (pp. 141-142). At the end of the book, he ignores the influence of events during the Second World War on social policy in the 1940s and 1950s. He ignores rural poverty throughout the book.

Despite these limitations, this book should quickly replace existing summary accounts of the history of welfare in America. Unlike this reviewer, moreover, many British readers will be heartened by Katz’s polemical stance and his impatience with American exceptionalism in social policy.

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JOAN BUSFIELD, *Managing madness: changing ideas and practice*, London, Hutchinson, 1986, 8vo, pp. 406, £25.00.

Drawing upon existing historical and sociological scholarship, this book attempts a synthetic overview of the theoretical status of psychiatry and of changing psychiatric ideas and practices from the eighteenth century to the present. The focus is largely, though not exclusively, on English society (Scotland, for much of this period, had its own rather distinctive response to the problems posed by the mad). And the perspective is of someone sympathetic to recent critics of the psychiatric enterprise (though not unreservedly so). Currently a lecturer in sociology at the University of Essex, Dr Busfield was trained as a clinical psychologist, and worked in that capacity at a mental hospital for a number of years.

Part One of the book focuses on conceptual and definitional matters. After two chapters presenting what she terms “the liberal-conception of psychiatry and medicine”, she turns to an examination of the anti-psychiatrists of the 1960s and early 1970s—most prominently Szasz, Laing, Goffman, and Scheff. This is all quite useful but standard stuff. The discussions of anti-psychiatry, for instance, lean heavily on prior critiques by Sedgwick, Ingleby, and others. There are some sensible comments on the importance of examining the historical construction of conceptions of mental illness, and the implausibility of the claim that there exists “a single criterion for the diverse behaviours—thought and action—that can be regarded as symptomatic of mental illness” (p. 101). But none of this breaks new intellectual ground. Part One closes with a chapter on “medicine and power”, which contrasts two ways of thinking about medicine in general and psychiatry in particular, characteristic of sociology in the 1970s: the neo-Weberian perspective, whose representative figures, for Busfield, are Illich and Freidson; and *soi-disant* Marxists, among whom she numbers Navarro and myself. Her own sympathies, she makes clear, are with those in the latter camp, provided they avoid “a narrowly functionalist mould” (a trap into which I, among others, am alleged to have fallen). For such functionalism, she contends, denies the relevance of history, a serious error since the “current shape and character of psychiatry and of the mental health services which provide the context of psychiatry work [*sic*] are as much a product of past needs, pressures, and struggles as of present forces” (p. 145).

Part Two of her book, in keeping with this methodological prescription, rehearses the history of psychiatry and the mental health services, from the eighteenth-century trade in lunacy, through the era of optimism in the early nineteenth century, the construction of the Victorian