

Book Reviews

occurrence of evolutionary convergence and parallelism. Also, they had to try to relate their ideas to geological theories about the former distributions of land masses (including possible “isthmian links”) and climatic changes.

To give structure to his monstrously large topic, Bowler focuses on a smallish number of major themes: the shape of the “tree of life”; the question of whether arthropods were a natural group (in the Darwinian sense of having a common ancestry); the events that occurred in the transition from invertebrates to vertebrates; likewise the transition from fish to amphibia; the origin of birds; the origin of mammals; and problems in biogeography. The “tree of life” problem is to some extent revisited in Chapter 7 (‘Patterns in the past’), with additional comments on the issue of mass extinctions. The book is rounded off with a chapter on ‘The metaphors of evolution’, which considers, for example, whether the political imperialisms of the period may have left their mark on biologists’ thinking about “life’s splendid drama”.

There can be no doubt that we have here a major book. The author’s erudition and command of his subject are impressive indeed. The volume will lay the groundwork for future studies, and were I to attempt to add a chapter on to ‘Darwinism and biology’ to my old textbook *Darwinian impacts* I should undoubtedly have constant recourse to Bowler’s work. For I am readily persuaded that his theses are essentially correct (though further research amongst German and more particularly French sources might perhaps necessitate some modifications). Even so, I did not find the book a joy to read. It is dense; and each chapter leaves the reader somewhat unsatisfied. Setting his face firmly against the slightest hint of “presentism”, Bowler is primarily concerned to tell, in almost positivist fashion, just what evolutionary biologists were thinking and doing in his period (roughly from Darwin to about 1940). As a result, none of the “stories” that Bowler tells has an “ending”. The issues do not really get disentangled or resolved. They are mostly just “left” (“abandoned” would be too strong a word) at about the

middle of the twentieth century.

Take, for example, the question of the debates about mammal-like reptiles and the transition from reptiles to mammals. This topic warrants a book in itself. And were anyone to undertake the task, we might have the narrative carried forward until the time when a consensus was achieved (or we could have the story of a series of consensuses). The same might be done for the debates about the origins of feathers and flight, which is a fascinating historical story, about which I would gladly know more. And so on . . .

However, as said, Bowler has other objectives in view, which I must and do respect; and if his programme is accepted, then one must willingly acknowledge that it has been amply fulfilled. But one could hardly say that we have a “rattling good story”. I venture to suggest that the absolute eschewal of the slightest hint of Whiggery may be partly responsible!

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Eva Bertram, Morris Blachman, Kenneth Sharpe, Peter Andreas, *Drug war politics: the price of denial*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1996, pp. xiv, 347, £40.00, \$48.00 (hardback 0-520-20309-7); £13.95, \$17.95 (paperback 0-520-20598-7).

The continuing battles to modify the punitive stance of the U.S. “war on drugs” have been marked by hard hitting investigative analyses forcefully advancing the reformist case. *Drug war politics* is the latest of these. Committed and activist, it nevertheless explores the issue more deeply than usual, closely illustrating how U.S. policy, in purporting to prevent drug use, actually causes more harm through deepening race and class divisions, facilitating the spread of HIV, and fatally injuring individual human rights. Meanwhile, the punitive method fails in its primary objective—to prevent or stop drug use.

How, the authors ask, can policy continue to

Book Reviews

operate when it has patently failed? Drawing on the work of historians such as Musto, they trace the origins of drug control in pre-World-War I taxation law, and the failure of the U.S. medical profession to promote a public health attitude to drugs. The heyday of the anti-crime approach came in the inter-war years with the reign of Harry Anslinger at the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Even relative “liberalization” in the 1960s, with the institution of methadone maintenance programmes, still operated within the punitive paradigm. Treatment was justified as a crime-fighting tool.

Politicians have not taken on board the failure of current policy. The last to do so was Jimmy Carter, whose attempt to reform the marijuana laws came seriously unstuck. Since then Republican Presidents from Nixon to Reagan have used the “war on drugs” as a domestic vote-gathering device as well as an arm of foreign policy. Bill Clinton, in whom many hopes were initially invested, has failed to initiate reform.

All in all, this is a gloomy story. But *Drug war politics* ends on a positive note. The authors attempt to break away from the increasingly sterile legislation debate towards the possibilities of the public health path to reform. This, they argue, would bring America into line with other countries, Britain among them, who have taken this route as part of their response to the perceived crisis of HIV/AIDS. They argue for regulation on the model of alcohol or tobacco rather than a free market. Despite the current stalemate in drug politics, they discern possibilities of change. There are already local public health initiatives; and the politics of reform at the national level will be difficult but not ultimately impossible.

I have doubts about sections of this argument. The notion of “public health” could do with a more sophisticated historical assessment; public health also has its punitive side, but here it is used as an undisputed good without assessment of its changing definition over time. Paradigm shifts are perfectly possible, as the change from Prohibition to alcohol licensing illustrates. But the authors are vague about how that change might be effected

in the case of drugs. What, for example, could be the role of the medical profession? Where is the “policy community” in U.S. drug politics which will help bring about change? If the crisis of AIDS could not do it, what will? The international dimension to drug control (the origin of the original U.S. taxation law) is also barely mentioned. How do the authors propose to dismantle the international control system, which has a direct effect on national drug policies? But overall this is a well written book which is to be commended for recognizing that there is more to drug policy than a simple battle between penal and medical approaches.

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Anne Digby and John Stewart (eds),
Gender, health and welfare, London and New
York, Routledge, 1996, pp. x, 239, £40.00
(0-415-12886-2).

Ten years ago, a volume with this title would have been largely about women as recipients or even as neglected non-recipients of welfare services. And these welfare services would probably have been conceptualized as designed by men with men’s interests mainly in mind. But, as Digby and Stewart point out, in their excellent introduction to *Gender, health and welfare*, this approach often rendered invisible women’s activities as active providers and managers of welfare. Women’s agency in shaping welfare from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in Britain comprises the central theme of their book. More specifically, many of the contributions examine the significance of maternalism, of moral and political claims for women as mothers, in the development of welfare provision and for women as citizens.

Another recurrent theme is the complex relationship between voluntary and state welfare provision right up to (and after) the creation of the Welfare State. Voluntarism had a particular significance for women and for the