

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