

BOOK REVIEWS

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Psychologising madness

WHO would be a psychiatrist? The profession is struggling to recruit, and its powers of coercion and control as arbiter of the Mental Health Act are a burden many psychiatrists could do without. As in the 1960s, there is a growing voice of dissent within the discipline; anti-psychiatry has become post-psychiatry. Last but by no means least, the theories and practices of psychiatry are under constant scrutiny by everyone from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to the web-based Prozac Survivor Group.

Somewhere in here clinical psychology has found a foothold, which it defends increasingly tenaciously. CBT and REBT, techniques first developed by psychiatrists, are now part of mainstream psychology's *raison d'être*. Forensic and clinical psychologists are themselves

Madness Explained: Psychosis and Human Nature

RICHARD P. BENTALL

LONDON: ALLEN LANE, 2003; Hb £25.00 (ISBN 0 71 359 249 2)

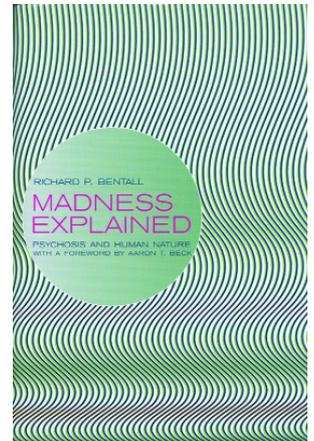
REVIEWED BY **Craig Newnes**

now jostling for Mental Health Act powers. And, of course, there is a fine tradition of academic resistance to the medicalisation of distress.

Madness Explained is part of this tradition. It is essential reading for psychologists working in mental health services and researchers working with constructs like schizophrenia and manic depression. I doubt whether many consultant psychiatrists would find the time to get through its 640 pages, but it should be on the reading lists of any medical school that takes its subject matter seriously. All undergraduate psychology courses should have it as a reference text to balance the trend amongst psychology

textbooks to treat diagnostic categories as valid ways of describing and clustering conduct.

Richard Bentall performs an enormous service for both mental health professionals and service users alike. His arguments against the physical and genetic models of the more extreme kinds of distress and alienation are rigorous and data-driven. His elucidation of the idea that madness and normality are on a socially contextualised continuum is as academically sound as one could hope to expect. Critiques of the scant theoretical bases for biological treatments are equally thorough. Not least of these critiques is the fact that many so-called psychotic states



(e.g. anhedonia) are simply the result of neuroleptic medication.

The writing throughout is lively and some of the subheads a treat ('States, traits and meaningless debates' anyone?). The text is peppered with vignettes from the author's academic journey and personal life; the death of his brother and break up of his marriage are used to good effect in exploring feelings. Psychological therapies for madness are touched upon, but this is not Bentall's brief. In explaining madness he draws on psychological, neurological, genetic, biochemical and even mathematical ideas and research. In doing so, he inevitably points the way to therapeutic intervention, but like any good psychologist, he knows that research evidence is only one factor in why treatments catch on.

Madness Explained may be seen to have faults. For some it will be too detailed; but I agree with Bentall that thorough analysis of methodology and methodological failings is central to a scientific mindset. Bentall also has the difficult task of privileging psychological explanation without putting off medically trained readers. In consequence, he uses diagnostic categories and medical terms like

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Attachment and Intersubjectivity

NICOLA DIAMOND & MARIO MARRONE

LONDON: WHURR, 2003; Pb £25.00

(ISBN 1 86156 126 1)

REVIEWED BY **Rowan Myron**

THIS book addresses some of the fundamental issues of representation and cognition in attachment theory, issues that can so often be forgotten as researchers apply attachment-based concepts to an ever-increasing range of topics. The authors also address a range of issues from motivation and sexuality, to 'co-thinking' and memory in attachment, most of it centred on offering explanations of how attachment can explain how we deal with life and relationships.

The book provides some deeply considered thoughts and perspectives on attachment theory

– Bowlby himself talked of ploughing the same field as Freud, just starting from a different corner. However, although the authors take great pains to integrate the concepts of attachment theory and psychoanalysis I am not sure they completely succeed. There are obvious points of overlap, but also significant differences that cannot be ignored.

This is an unusual book. Aimed at the practical sphere, those working with clients may find it a useful and appealing read. As an academic, I found some of it interesting and some of it a little redundant (the two-chapter emphasis on sexuality for example). However, the authors do present the reader with an angle on attachment theory that is stimulating and thought-provoking.

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'symptoms' throughout. At one point he repeats the familiar trick in psychiatric research of acknowledging that most of it is fundamentally flawed but *still* claims that 'unravelling the mysteries of the central nervous system' will eventually 'lead to dramatic improvements in the quality of human life'. I don't think so, somehow. He is rather too curtly dismissive of Thomas Szasz; and the almost 100 pages of notes might seem a bit much. To be fair, most of these are references.

Significantly, perhaps, it is not until the final page that Bentall suggests a wholly different route, one first put to

him by Marius Romme, a Dutch psychiatrist. Romme believes it is time to *celebrate* madness. This is the stage beyond the normalising tendency of the Hearing Voices Network and light years from the use of pulverising psychoactive drugs. Do you notice a theme here? Psychiatrists often have good ideas and some clinical psychologists run with them. Perhaps being a certain kind of psychiatrist wouldn't be so bad.

■ *Craig Newnes is Psychological Therapies Director for Shropshire County Primary Care Trust.*

Practical Management of Personality Disorder

W. JOHN LIVESLEY

NEW YORK: GUILFORD PRESS; 2003; Hb £34.50
(ISBN 1 57230 889 3)

REVIEWED BY **Ange Drinnan**

JOHN Livesley, a Canadian psychiatrist, has produced a comprehensive, readable and optimistic text on personality disorders. I was relieved to find that this was to be a psychological read rather than a medical one, although Livesley, who also edits the *Journal of Personality Disorders*, does uncritically accept the evidence for a genetic basis for personality disorders. I remained unconvinced on this issue, given that his evidence seemed to be based simply on psychosocial perpetuation of psychological difficulties.

Livesley's central tenet is that, given the complex nature of personality disorders, an eclectic approach is required, based on treating specific difficulties. It is refreshing that he advocates a more symptom-based approach, as opposed to a diagnostic one, as is being increasingly and successfully applied with psychotic symptoms. He teases out which interventions are most effective for specific difficulties within a stages-of-change framework, and his arguments for 'reasoned eclecticism' are presented with reference to the evidence base.

The book itself draws on psychodynamic, cognitive and self-psychology theories, as well as interpersonal, cognitive analytic and dialectical behaviour therapies. As a natural-born integrator, I found this approach both validating and clinically helpful, but his plea that we 'move away from one dimensional approaches' may prove more contentious to those of a purist bent.

■ *Ange Drinnan is a clinical psychologist with Oxleas Trust.*

Examining the neural basis of memory

The Physiology of Cognitive Processes

ANDREW PARKER, ANDREW DERRINGTON & COLIN BLAKEMORE (Eds)
OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003; Pb £39.50 (ISBN 0 19 85260 5)

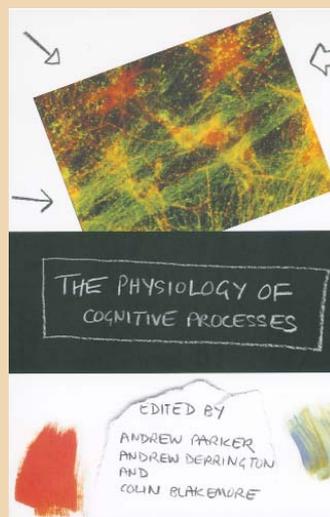
REVIEWED BY **Leigh Riby**

THIS book comprises a collection of papers presented at a discussion meeting organised by the Royal Society in 2001. The central theme is concerned with the neural processes underlying our everyday cognition. The contributors do a fine job illustrating the progress being made in isolating the neuronal activity responsible for a range of perceptual, attentional and memorial phenomena.

We learn about how traditional micro-electrode recording and innovative non-invasive techniques on humans can be used in tandem to widen our understanding of the physiology of

cognition. A large portion of the volume is related to visual perception. The key topics covered by contributors include the neural basis of colour perception, how the brain decides where we look, and the effects of attentional state on our visual system.

Another major theme draws on recent work examining the neural basis of memory. For example, Michael Rugg and colleagues describe very well how our everyday episodic memories can be explored using both event-related potential and functional magnetic resonance



imaging (fMRI) methodology. This is followed by an excellent chapter that challenges the widely accepted view that memory systems have specific locations within the brain. One caveat is that two somewhat technical chapters are included in the volume – one outlining the physiological basis of the fMRI signal and one describing the nature of the neural codes in the visual cortex.

Overall, the book is informative, albeit at times quite technical, and goes far in contributing to our understanding of cognitive processes. Notably, the book includes chapters from authors with well-deserved reputations in the field of cognitive neuroscience, all of which report fresh research findings from their respective laboratories. I highly recommend this book to advanced undergraduates, postgraduates and academics with an interested in the neural bases of everyday cognitive functioning.

■ *Dr Leigh Riby is a research lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University.*