

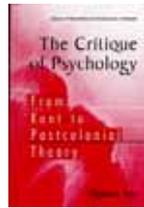
BOOK REVIEWS

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Asking questions of psychology

It is unsurprising that a comprehensive history of the critiques of psychology has been slow in arriving. After all, historians of psychology have, understandably, preferred to concentrate on its successes. And yet there is certainly no lack of criticism to cover. Many have pointed to a fragmented, disjointed discipline whose proponents cannot even agree on basic terminology. Indeed, Georges Politzer called 'the history of psychology, a history of disappointments'.

Harsh words indeed, but for Thomas Teo in this examination of critical approaches to psychology, it is just such damning accusations that must be faced head-on for progress to be made. Teo argues that psychology should own up to its shortcomings; the danger is



The Critique of Psychology: From Kant to Postcolonial Theory

THOMAS TEO

NEW YORK: SPRINGER; 2005; HB £40.50
(ISBN 0 387 25355 6)

REVIEWED BY **Jeremy Dean**

that 'an unaware discipline is prone to self-misunderstanding and defence mechanisms'.

And so, donning our flak jackets, we plunge into the *The Critique of Psychology*. Teo traces the ebb and flow of criticism, starting with German philosophers of the early 19th century. Most notable of these was Immanuel Kant who argued that psychology would never become anything more than a 'natural description of the soul' and any attempt to create an 'experimental doctrine' was doomed to failure.

Kant's ideas then laid the foundation for the natural-scientific critique of psychology. Teo focuses on the work of F.A. Lange – a largely neglected figure in the history of psychology – who aimed for 'a psychology without a soul', making him the philosophical grandfather of behaviourism.

Reacting to the natural-scientific approach, and leading the charge of the human-scientific critique is Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey called for a return to an analysis of human experience, a move from mere

description to a semblance of understanding.

Here, between Lange and Dilthey, psychology's future battle lines are drawn.

Moving into the 20th century, Teo traces the modern critiques of psychology. The Marxist critique opening the discipline's eyes to socio-historical factors, the feminist critique to gender and alternative methodologies, while the postmodernist and postcolonial critiques emphasising, in different ways, ethical and political domains.

Throughout the book Teo is relatively tentative with his own interpretations, which is a pity as when they are expressed, the book comes alive. Catching the eye are parts of the postcolonial critique, which provides insight into the institutionalised racism of early psychological researchers like Paul Broca and Gustave Le Bon. In a similarly enlivening vein, Teo describes Ignacio Martín-Baró's liberation psychology, which calls for the discipline to ask questions that are of practical use to the oppressed.

This is an academic book that provides a useful historical guide to the major criticisms of psychological theory over the last two centuries. As many of the critiques are essentially reactive to previous ideas, it is easy for the reader to be disorientated by the continuous shifting between theoretical positions. Searching for unity in the critiques of psychology is, like unity in psychological knowledge itself, a hard task. It would be harsh to blame the author for the fragmented nature of the subject matter.

■ *Jeremy Dean is at University College London.*

NOT LABELLED BUT ENABLED

HERE is a book on behaviour clearly written for staff in early years settings and students in childcare or early education. Refreshingly, it rejects within-child labelling and instead takes a systemic and environmental approach to bringing about change. Arrangements in an early years setting, for example a playgroup or nursery, are within the control of the staff, whereas other factors in the child's life are not, so this is the focus of the book.

A child's behaviour is framed as a form of communication, and the staff's method of acknowledging and responding is critical in moving forward positively. The idea is that by following good practice in social and emotional learning strategies throughout the setting, all children, not only those with difficult behaviour, will benefit from their early years care and education. This is a clear example of inclusion at its best.

This philosophical stance is laid out in the introduction. The rest of the book gives practical, if somewhat didactic, advice on a range of matters – preparing for new entrants; structure

Setting the Scene for Positive Behaviour in the Early Years

JASON SWALE

ABINGDON: ROUTLEDGE; 2006; Pb £18.99 (ISBN 0 415 37312 3)

REVIEWED BY **Miriam Landor**

and balance in the curriculum; room layout; responding to individual differences; teaching emotional literacy, and so on – through jargon-free text and case studies.

Very occasionally an experienced practitioner may wish to take issue with a proposal – I agree with providing a box of tissues but hope it would encourage independent nose-wiping rather than accommodating the 'children who wish to have a cry'. For the most part the advice is excellent, and I think this book will be very helpful for its designed audience.

■ *Miriam Landor is an educational psychologist in training at Dundee University, and a former preschool home visiting support teacher.*

The fascination of Franz

HYPNOSIS, despite decades of research, is still enveloped with a veil of scientific mystery. This volume is an authoritative selection of seminal papers on the subject, spanning the greater part of the 20th century.

The book begins with the historical development of hypnosis. It was quite fascinating to learn that hypnosis emerged from the works of Franz Mesmer, who claimed to manipulate physical magnetism by slow passes of his hands over the patient's body. This resulted in trance-like states for some patients, and prompted the use of the technique with patients with hysteria by Charcot in Paris. Freud used the method for a while to elicit unconscious drives and memories, although he eventually abandoned it in favour of free association and dream analysis.



Hypnosis: Theory, Research and Applications

MICHAEL HEAP & IRVING KIRSCH
ALDERSHOT: ASHGATE; 2006; Hb £110.00
(ISBN 0 7546 2454 4)

REVIEWED BY Cedric Ginestet

It then took almost 30 years before hypnosis was reclaimed by psychologists as a subject worth researching. This revival was initiated by Clark Hull, who created the foundations of the quantitative study of hypnosis with particular emphasis on the understanding of individual differences in hypnotic susceptibility. This naturally attracted a wide range of personality experts, who have investigated the different correlates of hypnotisability.

For example, people who are responsive to hypnotic induction typically display a greater ability to sustain attention and inhibit other incoming stimuli. By contrast, people scoring high

on extraversion and arousability are unlikely to be hypnotised. Highly susceptible individuals seem to display EEG recordings at rest similar to those displayed by fakirs, who have been intensively trained in controlling pain. Further, hypnotisable people also show great hemispheric flexibility when switching between tasks involving different parts of the brain.

The volume also contains a large set of articles on the therapeutic applications of hypnosis. It is generally believed that hypnosis is used for pain reduction. However, this is not exactly the case. Rather than being a substitute for analgesics, hypnotherapy is principally used as an adjunct to medication.

The last section of the book is a set of papers on legal and professional issues, particularly those arising when hypnosis is used to aid memory recollection for substantiating evidence in court.

Some readers may regret the lack of coverage of more controversial applications of hypnosis, such as hypnosurgery or neuro-linguistic programming. However, this is not the object of this volume, which concentrates on the most scientifically sound research on hypnosis. This handbook is therefore recommended to both practitioners and researchers with an interest in altered states of consciousness.

■ *Cedric Ginestet is in the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at Imperial College London.*

Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications

CURTIS DUNKEL & JENNIFER KERPELMAN (EDS.)
NEW YORK: NOVA SCIENCE; 2006; Hb £47.99 (ISBN 1 59454 431 X)

REVIEWED BY John Rowan

BACK in 1986, Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius published a paper which broke new ground. It introduced the notion of possible selves – concrete representations of hopes and fears about the future. They found that students who had a vision of their own future possible selves did better at a university than students who did not. Since then ‘the conceptualization and application of possible selves as a vital and complex component of identity has mushroomed across domains of basic and applied research’, as we are told in this book. The book itself is written by students and followers of Markus and Nurius, chapter after chapter, all within the rubrics of empirical research.

Many others have found the idea of multiplicity within the person a valuable one: Hermans and Dimaggio with the dialogical self, Stiles with assimilation theory, White and Epston on personal narratives, Young on internal schemas, my own work on subpersonalities, and many approaches to psychotherapy. Such work often uses the idea that internal selves can be talked to, and can talk back. But this book ignores all this work. It seems odd to me to have any kind of a self that cannot actually communicate. In my view, a deeply disappointing book.

■ *John Rowan is an independent consultant in London.*

Person-Centred Counselling in a Nutshell

ROGER CASEMORE
LONDON: SAGE; 2006; Pb £9.99
(ISBN 1 4129 0767 5)

REVIEWED BY Alexandra

Pentaraki

THIS pocket book provides a good short introduction to the theory and practice of person-centred counselling. It describes the core principles that underlie the person-centred counselling approach using real examples from the writer's practice. There is also reference to the primary writings of Carl Rogers (the founder of person-centred counselling) and his ideas. Although the book refers to the core principles of Rogerian counselling like unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy, there is also an introduction to other important core principles like the importance of psychological conduct in therapy. Finally, there is a description, also illustrated by case studies, of the central beliefs that underpin the approach, like the self-actualising tendency that helped Rogers to develop his work. The writer manages to include the characteristics and the important role of the person-centred counsellor.

Although the book represents ‘person-centred counselling in a nutshell’ the writer does not refer to any research evidence that supports the theory and practice of person-centred counselling. Real case studies are used to support the arguments, but I think that the arguments would be stronger if research evidence were included. However, I recommend the book to students, professionals or even clients with an interest in person-centred counselling.

■ *Alexandra Pentaraki is a psychologist and PhD student at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London.*