Book Reviews

History and the Professions in America

Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspiration, 1750–1850 (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1965. 247 pp., $5.95) is a bewildering book, a mixture of the very good and the perversely bad, of hard work and arbitrary exegesis, of insight and opacity. The development of the professions in America has not been a popular field for the historian; there is little place in the "standard" canon of historical literature for studies of the ministry, the bar, or the medical profession. One looks forward, therefore, with real anticipation to any serious work on the history of the professions. This was especially the case with respect to the present work, for its author, Daniel H. Calhoun, has already written a promising study of the civil engineer in pre-Bellum America. Unfortunately, the book itself is disappointing, disappointing not because of the author's lack of ambition or imagination, but because the achievement promised by his abilities and high seriousness of purpose has been flawed in its execution.

This study consists of three sections (the sections follow a general introduction and precede a conclusion). The first section concerns itself with the evolving values of the medical profession in New York City between, roughly, 1790 and 1847; the second with the structural development of the bar in frontier Tennessee; the third with changing career patterns in the ministry in New Hampshire. The medical and legal sections begin with vignettes; the medical with J. W. Francis's first anniversary discourse to the New York Academy of Medicine in 1847; the legal with a frontier brawl in which a prominent Tennessee lawyer was involved as a young man. The body of these sections consists of discussion and explication illuminating the texts provided by the symbolic introductory vignettes. The final section, and by far the longest and best, concerns itself with a specific problem—the decline of permanency in ministerial tenures in the Congregational and Presbyterian clergy of New Hampshire. A strand that unites these disparate materials is the polarity which Calhoun sees in the mid-19th century between individualism and conformity, between excellence and mediocrity. Each of the professions, Calhoun argues, moved in this period "toward uniformity, away from any individual distinction other than what emerged from impersonal competition in the labor market that the profession itself became."

Thus, the author begins his chapter on the medical profession in New York City with an analysis of Francis's discourse which, Calhoun submits, "called for a kind of moratorium on attention to individual achievement." The reason: a need to close ranks against opposition within and without the profession, a fear of shifting standards. The body of the chapter is a brief narrative of the rivalries and squabbles that marked the history of the City's medical profession before 1847 and served as the background to the formation of the New York Academy of Medicine. A major difficulty in this discussion lies in the author's having chosen a polarity which, though real, is of debatable centrality in the structural development of the medical profession. Only the most strained and arbitrary reading of Francis's address, moreover, could interpret it as an attack on individualism. Even the few passages extracted from his 112-page oration and cited by the author do not really support the interpretation placed on them. Calhoun's discussion of the legal profession is organized about an explanation of why, when he was an older man, lawyer J. C. Guild wished to believe that the basic pattern of legal practice in the pre-Bellum Tennessee of his youth had been that of a circuit-riding bench and bar. Using county court dockets, Calhoun shows clearly that Guild's recollection was false, that only in the first generation of statehood was this true. As the author sees it, Guild's selective falsification of history is a symptom of his unwillingness to accept the conditions of his own ultimate success, of a commercial, urban bar, and of his desire to cling to a kind of comforting organic unity, one which seemed, moreover, to allow scope for the expression of individual style. The longest section, that on the ministry, begins with the problem of tenure and is structured about an analysis of career patterns from the late 18th through the mid-19th century. This is an excellent and original piece of work and might well have served as the backbone of a study of the ministry in this period, a study that might have been more unified and disciplined than *Professional Lives*.

Indeed, in a sense, the failings of this rather diffuse book can, I think, be laid to a failure of discipline. This lack of discipline manifests itself in a number of ways, stylistically in an overwrought and at times almost opaque prose, within chapters in an organization often haphazard. (The introductory chapter, for example, "Power, responsibility, and style," has no readily definable organization and might as easily have been called "Random reflections on power, responsibility, and style.") Nor is there a larger theoretical structure. I can see no particular reason why, for example, an individualism-conformity polarity should have been treated as central; in the medical profession, to cite another example, an analysis centered on localism and cosmopolitanism might have been more valuable. In any case, however, we are never provided with an explicit discussion of why this particular problem was chosen, just as it is never explained precisely why New York City physicians, New Hampshire ministers, and Tennessee lawyers should find themselves together between the covers of a single slim volume. It is not that this selection of data might not have been justified; it is simply that the author saw no need for such justification (other than to note that the three areas were dissimilar). Why, common sense asks, did he not take his three professional case studies from the same area, or the same profession from three different areas? Or why not compare one of the professions with its counterpart in England or on the

Continent? The point is not that the author is necessarily wrong, but that his failure to make explicit his logical strategy invites criticism—and deprives him of the discipline inherent in the writing of an exposition of his method.

In view, finally, of the comparatively undeveloped state of the literature on the professions, it is rather strange that the author and the publisher, Harvard University Press, have not provided the book's readers with a bibliography, not even with the usual polite bibliographic footnote in which one inters one's predecessors. Thus, it is possible for the common reader to finish this study without learning that Richard Shryock, among others, has written specifically on the medical profession in this period, that Sidney Mead ever wrote on the ministry, or that in the not distant past sociologists have been responsible for a substantial literature on the professions, both theoretical and descriptive. Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, Everett Hughes, to cite only a few obvious examples, are not even mentioned; neither are studies of the professions in other countries during the first half of the 19th century.

Perhaps, however, my remarks concerning a lack of discipline should be charged not against our author, but against his own profession. It is almost incomprehensible that, in 1965, an able and ambitious young historian could have written a book on the professions without feeling it necessary to provide any explicit theoretical structure, without referring to the possible need to consider such concepts, without even a nod at the possibilities inherent in comparative studies. Perhaps Calhoun's confusion of focus and arbitrary organization are an index not to his own conceptual vagueness but to the values and training of his profession (and mine). For historians are in a period of real intellectual change; the more gifted and imaginative are dissatisfied with traditional academic models, but still unsure of new forms and values.

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Inorganic Chemistry

Inorganic Chemistry, vol. 1, *Principles and Non-Metals* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1965. 699 pp., $8) by C. S. G. Phillips and R. J. P. Williams, differs markedly from previous textbooks on this subject. In the words of the authors, "inorganic chemistry is commonly presented as little more than a catalogue of facts. The purpose of this book is to suggest that it can also be a stimulating intellectual and experimental inquiry." I do not entirely agree with their first statement, but I am in complete agreement with their second. Both the factual and theoretical aspects of inorganic chemistry are extremely important and can be intellectually stimulating.

The authors are to be congratulated for having written a scholarly treatment of inorganic chemistry. The many figures that show a variety of different correlations of properties of elements and of compounds constitute the most novel and useful aspect of the book, in my opinion. For example, Fig. 3.7 is a plot of the bond dissociation energies of homonuclear diatomic molecules versus the number of valency electrons per atom. This plot, which I had not seen elsewhere, nicely shows bond energy maxima at one and at five valency electrons. Such a clear-cut illustration is most useful to students, particularly when it can be readily explained on the basis of current bonding theories.

Since the book does depart from tradition, I feel it may be helpful to list the chapter headings: "Wave mechanics"; "Atomic structures and the periodic table"; "Assemblies of like atoms"; "The bond model"; "The ionic model"; "The band model"; "Chemical equilibria"; "Solid structures: Nonstoicheiometry and phase equilibria"; "Electrode potentials"; "Kinetics and mechanism"; "Hydrogen"; "The halogens"; "Oxygen and oxides"; "Oxyacids and hydroxides"; "Non-aqueous solutions"; "Sulfur and group VIB"; "Nitrogen to boron: The remaining nonmetals"; and "Postscript to nonmetals." Volume 2, on metals, will be published later.

The chapter on the band theory of bonding for continuous solids such as metals or salts is excellent; a consideration of this topic is not often included in textbooks of inorganic chemistry. Also very good are the discussions on wave mechanics, chemical equilibria, phase diagrams, and kinetics and mechanisms. The current trend seems to be to include more and more material of this type in textbooks of inorganic chemistry. What then is left for the full-year course in physical chemistry? In my opinion there is some duplication here, and it should be avoided, particularly in view of the fact that most schools require only a one-quarter or one-semester course in inorganic chemistry.

In addition to having written an outstanding book, the authors have also included a very good set of questions at the end of each chapter. These questions vary from extremely difficult to fairly straightforward. I cannot answer several of them, and this may also be true of other instructors. It would be helpful to have answers for the more difficult questions.

The chapters that deal with the chemistry of the nonmetals also differ markedly from the usual treatment. For example, the chapter on the halogens contains 23 figures, most of which are not in other textbooks, showing various types of correlations. In this way the student gets a graphic illustration of the different trends in properties and behaviors of the halogens and their compounds.

The book is well written and well illustrated, and the printing and the paper are good; I strongly recommend it to both students and faculty. In our American universities, the book should serve as a textbook of inorganic chemistry for students who have had physical chemistry.

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How Big Is Big?

Hospitals, Doctors, and the Public Interest (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1965. 351 pp., $8.50), edited by John H. Knowles, contains the 1963 Lowell Lectures, "The Hospital's Responsibility to the Community," which followed a similar series presented by Nathaniel W. Faxon (1948), then director of the Massachusetts General Hospital. The editor, who is the general director of the hospital, states that the volume is "intended for laymen, medical students, the medical profession, the political profession, and the experts of other disciplines in the hope that it will increase understanding and lead to considered and constructive action of all sides.

Better understanding of the hospital, its historical evolution, its present problems, and its obligatory role as a