A New Scholarship

Psychology in Twentieth-Century Thought and Society. MITCHELL G. ASH and WILLIAM R. WOODWARD, Eds. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988. x, 320 pp. $42.50.

In 1966, Robert Young in a review essay in *History of Science* delivered some stinging criticisms of what he considered the well-intentioned but parochial and amateurish scholarship then characterizing writing in the history of psychology. A plea to catch up with the ideas and standards developed in the historiography of the natural sciences concluded this attempt at consciousness-raising. Some 20 years later, it appears that a "new" history of psychology has indeed emerged. Whatever else, the number of publications in the field has increased dramatically. The current spate of texts and quasi-texts may represent nothing more than publishers' competition for a market, perhaps stimulated by recent recommendations that a history course be included in graduate psychology programs, together with an outbreak of centennials celebrating forgotten events from the early days of the discipline. A bit more mystifying—given the abysmally low subscription count for the one journal focused on the field, the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences*—is the existence of a market for the surprising number of new monographic treatments of narrower issues, biographies, and compilations.

Going beyond sheer numbers, the new history has heeded the call for more critical and sophisticated scholarship, even if the message has not yet penetrated to all practitioners, especially textbook writers. The main characteristics of this new scholarship appear to be: an awareness of the pitfalls of naively "presentist" approaches; a shift from uncritical reliance on secondary sources and their anecdotes not just to close scrutiny of published originals but to the often laborious sifting of archival source material that may greatly expand and deepen contemporary information; and the asking of new and more interesting questions, largely about the linkages between strictly scientific developments and their personal, institutional, and social-political contexts. This approach took shape in the work of two groups of researchers, one a band of mostly young historians (of science) choosing to apply their skills and methods to the offbeat and unplowed field of psychology, the other a number of psychologists of various stripes disillusioned with the mainstream's rhetoric about positivist-empirical science and the whiggish tales of its emergence from subjectivity and speculation into the objectivity of experimental facts. One of the first, and controversial, projects tackled the traditional success story of early intelligence testing, which upon close inspection revealed some forgotten but troublesome ties to the ideology of eugenics, racism, and immigration-restriction legislation. Another revisionist effort led to the rediscovery of Wundt's voluntarist psychology behind its fragmented and distorted orthodox rendition shaped by Titchener's and Boring's agendas. Since then the scope of the field has expanded enormously, as the number of its practitioners and with them its research topics have multiplied.

The present volume is an excellent representative of these developments. Put together by two historians, it illustrates the variety of endeavors, in the range of authors, half of them historians, half psychologists, one-third women (though one of them was omitted from the set of capsule biographies on pp. vii–ix), and half born outside the United States; in the variety of methods, from insider accounts and textual exegesis to (mostly) archival research; and in the wide sweep of topics, just half of them having to do with American psychology, stretching all the way from an internalist analysis of a developing research program (Titchener's), through a discussion of the role of women psychologists (neglected), to a quick glimpse at the shifting fate of psychology in the People's Republic of China and a rather offbeat story about two British officers' psychoanalytic practice in colonial India. In the absence of any obvious common focus, the editors' skills and a bit of stretching are needed to pull out some common threads: the course of professionalization and the price the discipline had to pay for it, the question of rationality and scientific progress, and the role of political contexts in the growth or demise of certain orientations or schools.

I shall skip the standard comments about the problems of multi-authored volumes, as I will also omit a catalog of the book's contents and a quick assignment of grades to the various contributions. I should point out that the main arguments of a number of the chapters have already been presented in other places, which however are less accessible to the non-specialist. And if perhaps not all the contributions provide exciting new ideas, the volume as a whole makes a handy and instructive sampler of contemporary historiography of 20th-century psychology. As such, it should be of interest to a wide audience wanting to update its conception of history beyond Boring's Zeitgeist and Kuhn's paradigms and of use as a source of readings in history classes. As for this reader, the volume left me with two troubling thoughts. One came from David Joravsky's fascinating chapter on Vigotskii and Soviet psychology, which raises some provocative issues too complex to restate here but ends in the question why scientific psychologists in the Soviet Union (and by extension in Nazi Germany and perhaps elsewhere) have failed to seriously challenge those in power while creative writers did engage political authority in the "struggle for our souls" (p. 207). The other, related thought involves the direction of the present boomlet in the historiography of psychology. The boomlet began, at least in part, as an attempt to gain some understanding of the discontinuities in the discipline's evolution and of their determinants, and with the hope of playing, by narrowing the gap between scientistic rhetoric and human reality, an "emancipatory role," as William Woodward in his concluding chapter (p. 305) puts it. But are such lofty aspirations still relevant, or is instead the field in the process of reproducing its parent discipline psychology in its fragmentation into specialist groups with professional interests, but with little except competitive concerns about each other and the larger issues? In the diversity of its voices, this volume does not provide a clear and reassuring answer.

FRANZ SAMELSON
Department of Psychology, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

The Science of Mind

The Making of Cognitive Science. Essays in Honor of George A. Miller. WILLIAM HIRST, Ed. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988. x, 284 pp., illus. $29.95.

The problems of language and cognition have been central to George Miller's research and theorizing throughout his exceptionally productive and creative career. *The Making of Cognitive Science*, edited with care and insight by William Hirst, presents essays by 18 distinguished cognitive scientists who have worked with Miller. The result is a fitting tribute to him and a fascinating col-